

NINTENDO POWER



Rayman Legends • ZombiU • Paper Mario:
Sticker Star • Little Inferno • Pokémon
Black Version 2 and Pokémon White
Version 2 • Tekken Tag Tournament 2

CRASH HAS LANDED

Disney

CRASH & BERNSTEIN



ORIGINAL SERIES
MONDAYS 8:30/7:30c
STARTING OCTOBER 8

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Stuff of Legends 50

Ubisoft's limbleless hero returns exclusively on Wii U. Find out why he could set a new standard for 2D platformers with Rayman Legends.

Stuck on You 60

Sure, Paper Mario: Sticker Star for Nintendo 3DS might be a fantastic RPG with gorgeous 3D graphics and cool sticker-based moves, but you know the best part? It contains no scratch-and-sniff stickers of Wario.

To Live and Die in London 64

How long will you last in the zombie apocalypse? Put your survival skills to the test on Wii U in the Mature-rated ZombiU.



RAYMAN LEGENDS

50



PAPER MARIO: STICKER STAR

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ZOMBIU

64

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DS = NINTENDO DS

DW = DSiWARE

GB = GAME BOY

N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS

VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE

Wii = Wii

Wii U = Wii U

POWER UP

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PREVIEW

FEATURE

PLAYBACK

REVIEW

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

Symphony of the Goddesses

"...a black tie, green tunic affair."

- Wired.com

"...a show that would appeal to every possible type of Zelda fan."

- Complex Magazine

"The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses is pure magic."

- Destructoid

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Nintendo

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Pulse

Letter from the Editor

Steve Thomason



Most kids want to be an astronaut or a professional athlete when they grow up. I wanted to write the letter from the editor in a video game magazine. Yeah, I was sort of a weird kid. But I enjoyed reading the magazines that covered my favorite hobby as much as I enjoyed playing the games themselves. Every Tuesday, I'd walk to the local grocery store, use my allowance to pick up the latest mag, and eagerly read it from cover to cover in one sitting. The letter from the editor always felt like it was officially welcoming me to this experience that I loved so much, and I imagined that being the person who wrote that had to be about the coolest thing in the world. Turns out I was right. That I'm getting the opportunity to do it means a lot to me, and I want to personally thank all of our loyal readers, the fantastic NP crew, and three men who mentored me along the way: Casey Lee, Scott Pelland, and Chris Slate.

Of course, the occasion is bittersweet coming off the announcement that Nintendo Power will cease publication at the end of the year. But I promise that we'll make the last few issues memorable and give the magazine a sendoff worthy of its amazing 24-year legacy. Nintendo Power is an institution, and all of us here consider it a tremendous honor to have been a part of it. Thanks for reading and for making this kid's dream come true.

STEVE THOMASON

EDITOR IN CHIEF

NINTENDO POWER



2002
NINTENDO POWER
MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2012

Got questions? Comments? Feedback on the issue? Well, this is The Hoff here to tell you that we've got answers! (The usefulness of those answers may vary.) And, of course, we've got another special letter request: what are your fondest Nintendo Power memories? Send your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

There's No Place Like Home

What happened to Mario's house? The only times I can remember it are in Super Mario RPG when Mario had a pipe house, and in Super Mario Land 2 when he gets a mansion. What happened to the mansion? It was awesome when I beat SML2 and got the mansion, but then I never saw it again.

—NINJADOGPA1008

Mario obviously had to downgrade his living accommodations between Super Mario Land 2 and Super Mario RPG. Unofficially, we think he probably sold the mansion so he could pay for the hospital bills that pop up every time he drops poor Yoshi in a pit.

Food for Thought

I've always wondered what the real purposes of Kirby's quests are. Mario and Link save princesses. Pit saves humanity, and Fox saves the Lylat system, but Kirby is usually just trying to get his food back. If he's that hungry, couldn't he go to a restaurant or a grocery store? Do they even have that kind of thing in Dream Land? —WINPFAN
Sometimes a person—or, in this case, a roly-poly pink dude—just needs to stand up for the things he believes in. In Kirby's case, those things are usually edible. It's good to have firm beliefs.

Real Men Wear...

Why does Link wear tights and a skirt? Isn't he so epic that he could just wear whatever he wants?

—CYBERMORPH

For starters, it's a long tunic, not a skirt. And, yes, Link has pretty much earned the right to wear whatever he wants, and he's going with the green hat, tunic, and tights. So whatcha gonna do about it??

Down on the Farm

I just came out of the closet. The I-admit-I'm-a-Harvest-Moon-fan closet, that is. Admitting this was hard for me, and it took many years to overcome the fear of being mocked because I play a farming game, since no one in my circle of friends plays Harvest Moon. In my opinion, it's a great, relaxing game that can be played by everyone, but I feel like it may be slowing down. It's not only my friends not playing HM that worries me—it's that it doesn't receive the attention/advertising that I feel it should get. I love HM and I think it's a great series for everyone to at least try once just to give it a chance.

—A NEW-FOUND HM FAN

We hope you caught our preview of Harvest Moon 3D: A New Beginning last issue! Though the series isn't necessarily for everybody, it offers a unique experience that's well worth trying out. Who knows? Maybe you'll discover a new favorite.

Yay! I was not particularly interested in Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed until I saw Vyse on the character roster! It's great to see him in another game (although a Skies of Arcadia 2 would be highly preferable).

—PICKLEDTAPIOCA



Passing Out

After many months of denial, rationalization, and internal conflict, I've come to accept that I'm a StreetPass-aholic, in its earlier stages it wasn't so bad, but now it's become an absolute obsession...from lurking around in supermarket aisles to taking frequent trips to the mall, I've become borderline maniacal in my quest to get that coveted green light! —IAN B.

The first step is admitting you have a problem. The second step is discussing it with other people... so you can StreetPass with them.

A Bit Puzzling

I was reading a couple newsletters from last year about the Super NES and Nintendo 64, and I started wondering, "Hey, if there are 16-bit home consoles and

64-bit consoles, are there 32-bit consoles?" —KUBIAC10

There are indeed, but Nintendo jumped from 16 bits straight to 64 bits as far as home consoles go. However, the Game Boy Advance utilized a 32-bit processor, as did the short-lived Virtual Boy.

Compelling Case

I was hoping the staff at NP could solve this debate I've been having with my girlfriend. She thinks NP magazine is a waste of space in the house, but I see it as a collector's item. I just need someone else to talk some sense to her. (I already know I'm right.) —RYAN B.

Dear Ryan's girlfriend: To be completely frank, Ryan's Nintendo Power collection is probably the most awesome thing in the house. If you're running out of space, get rid of something less important, like your bed or the fridge. TTYL.

Kingdom Hurts

I just finished reading your review of Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance and I am extremely disappointed in the score you gave it and what you said about it. When you stated that the storytelling is horrible and that it's too confusing, I was so frustrated. Tetsuya Nomura, the producer of the Kingdom Hearts series, said this was to be the most confusing installment to date! I don't think you should've given the game that score when the producer of the game said it was going to be hard to understand. —ANDREW P.

Just because the creators have acknowledged that the story is a confusing mess doesn't mean that it's a good thing! We just wish they had fixed it! Also, we consider an 8.0 to be a very good score, and highly recommend the game in spite of its flaws.



DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

While reading the article in Volume 281 on Scribblenauts Unlimited, I couldn't help but remember how The Hoff said in Pulse on page 6 that he was riding a plastic, flying, minty, bearded brontosaurus. However, the sidebar in the Scribblenauts Unlimited article on page 51 says that minty is one of the words added in the new game. Does this mean that The Hoff's power is so great that he can teleport himself into the future to play a game that isn't out yet?

—TREVOR MCFUR

The Hoff says: What? You thought I was talking about Scribblenauts Unlimited when I mentioned that? While it's true that I did get to play the game before it came out, I was actually talking about my real-life plastic, flying, minty, bearded brontosaurus. I keep it parked just outside the Nintendo Power offices, right next to Steve's rabid, flatulent, miniature aircraft carrier and Justin's delicious, dancing, mutant, mouselike kraken.

Putting the NES in Nester

Recently while digging through my old NES games, I found an NES Play Action Football cartridge that I didn't even know I had. I realized that this is the first game Nester ever appeared in. The reason I'm telling you this is because I was wondering if you guys might want to buy it from me, seeing as he used to be your mascot. Anyone interested? It's in perfect condition.

—NINTENDUDE1228

Um...tempting, but we'll pass. (Get it? Pass? 'Cause it's a football game and stuff?) Luckily, anyone who wants to see Nester in all his 8-bit glory can check out the game on the Wii system's Virtual Console service.



Every amusement park has a haunted house of some kind. One fashioned after Luigi's Mansion would be perfect. Lighting effects would bring the ghosts to life throughout the whole place. —COLLEEN



What attractions would you want at a Nintendo theme park?

If there were a Nintendo theme park, I would love to see a lot of Legend of Zelda attractions, like a Spirit Tracks rollercoaster, or "Who can pull out the Master Sword?" (a Nintendo take on the Sword in the Stone from Disneyland).

—EKKYWAROTDTHMOEN17

There would have to be a Donkey Kong Country minecart rollercoaster. It's just too obvious! —VAMPIRE-JEKYLL

I would love to see a Duck Hunt shooting gallery. You could use a modified Zapper to shoot projectiles from various games (maybe mini Yoshi eggs, Deku Nuts, etc.) at duck cardboard cutouts. Of course, the dog runs the stand. If he laughs too much, you would be able to shoot him with a small Kirby plushie. Talking Navi cardboard cutouts would replace the ducks every Friday and Saturday. —GOLDFISH

It would be so incredibly legit if there was a Rainbow Road rollercoaster modeled after the infamous Mario Kart track. It would probably be the eighth wonder of the world. —EBONY BLACKBURRN

What would be cooler in a Nintendo amusement park than a real-life Pokémon Snap? You could get special goggles that let you see virtual images of Pokémon in

a bunch of different indoor and outdoor environments, and get the chance to snap a virtual picture or even catch them! —POTATO

I pick the obvious answer: Tingle Tower. It would have different carnival games inside, like Bombchu Bowling from Ocarina of Time, the claw game from Link's Awakening, Cucco-catching from The Minish Cap, the dreaded shoveling game from A Link to the Past, and (shudder) Fun Fun Island from Skyward Sword. When you pass a game, you could get a map, a Tingle doll, or a Rupee that could be cashed in for more prizes. —BRETT A.

While all the attractions would be awesome, you can't have an amusement park without food. The sound of health potions, Poffins, and spicy curry makes me (hungry!) Take my Rupees, Nintendo! —STREETPASEWANTER

I would love to see a Super Mario Bros. pipe maze. I mean, what would be more fun than jumping

into the famous green pipes that lead you to more? Once you get to the end, you would jump on that ol' pole. Then you would celebrate by dancing an Italian dance. Oh, would that be sweet. —VDMASER

If there was a Nintendo amusement park, they would have to make a ride based on the Sky Runner scene from EarthBound. It would be really fun to ride around over the park. Hopefully they wouldn't make it too faithful to the scene in the game, though; I don't want it to end with a crash landing! —BIVGASHUNTER83

I have three ideas for Nintendo theme-park attractions. A Super Mario Sunshine water ride, because I'm a sucker for water rides. A Bowser's Inside Story adventure house, because who wouldn't want to walk through Bowser's guts? And finally, a Samus kissing booth. Am I the only one who thinks she's still ridiculously hot with the Varia Suit on? —LEWANNIT

PLEASE WRITE US
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OR VIA CARRIER PIGEON AT

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TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR LETTER PUBLISHED:

Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us, we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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THE ULTIMATE HANDHELD...



What
Nintendo fans
think, want,
and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON
NEXT MONTH'S
TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

WHAT COLOR NINTENDO 3DS
XL DO YOU PREFER?



HOW ARE YOU
PRIMARILY PLAYING NEW
SUPER MARIO BROS. 2?



WHICH OF THESE KIRBY POWERS IS
YOUR FAVORITE?



WHAT IS THE COOLEST WEAPON FROM MEGA MAN 7?



WHAT SERIES'S MUSIC WOULD BE BEST SUITED FOR
A THEATRHYTHM GAME?

KINGDOM HEARTS

Kingdom Hearts 51% • Chrono Trigger 24%
Dragon Quest 22% • Mana series 4%

PROFESSOR LAYTON IS...



HAS A VIDEO GAME
EVER MADE YOU SO
EMOTIONAL THAT
YOU CRIED?



DO YOU LIKE RETRO
COLLECTIONS AND VIRTUAL
CONSOLE GAMES?



Yes!
I love the classics!

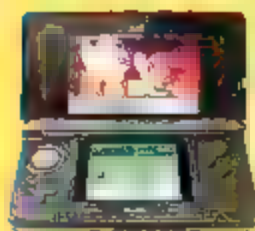


No.
Only new games
for me!

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The Ultimate Guide to **NINTENDO 3DS**



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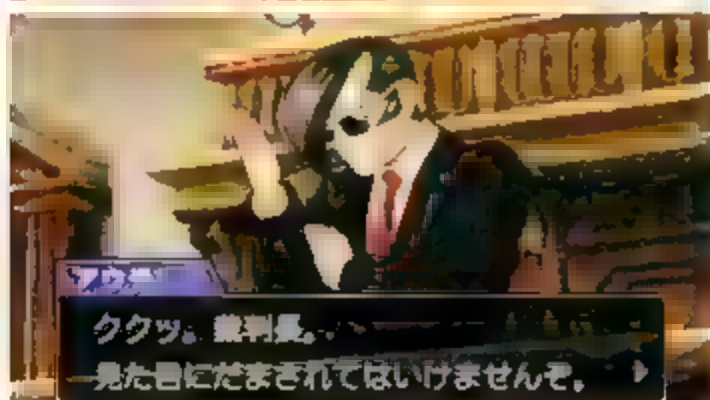


pg. 38



Available at newsstands, or order now at
www.nintendopower.com/SPC

POWER UP



All screenshots depict the Japanese version of the game. Delia



Phoenix Reborn

Everybody's favorite lawyer's back on Nintendo 3DS in the fifth Ace Attorney game

BACK IN JANUARY Capcom quietly confirmed that the fifth mainline Ace Attorney title was in the works. Now the publisher has revealed

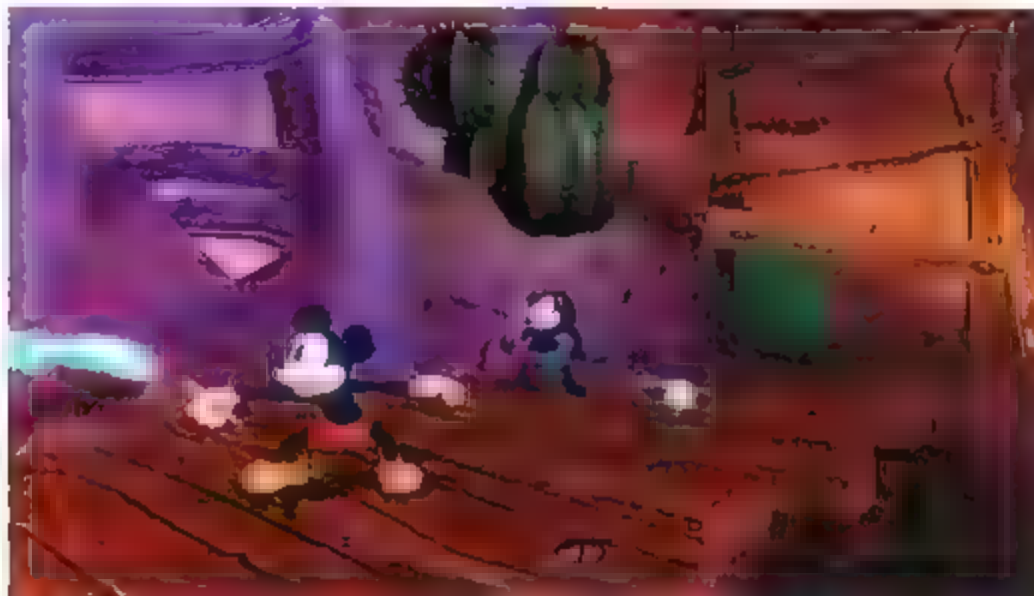
several new details about the game, including the platform (the Nintendo 3DS handheld) and the main character—Phoenix Wright. That's correct,

after being relegated to a supporting role in the fourth game in the series, Phoenix is back in the saddle for the fifth outing. Now 34 years old and sporting some spiky new threads, the spiky-haired hero is once again ready to defend the innocent, expose the guilty, and win tough cases by the skin of his teeth. Although Phoenix has returned, players can expect the game to contain numerous new elements, such as polygonal visuals (to better take advantage of the system's stereoscopic 3D effects) and new characters, including a yellow-clad woman who acts as Phoenix's new assistant and prosecutor Winston Payne's villainous brother. There will also be new gameplay elements

involving Phoenix's ability to gauge witnesses' emotions. But where is Miles Edgeworth? Will Maya Fey, Apollo Justice, and Trucy Wright appear? Ace Attorney fans will have to wait to find out. Although Capcom representatives have stated that the game is coming to North America, no release date has been set as of press time. —CHRIS H.

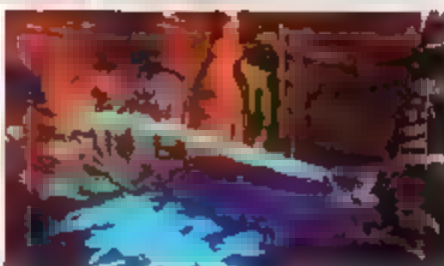
M-I-C-K-E-Y-W-i-i-U

The upcoming Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two gets a high-def makeover



MOUSEKETEERS OF ALL ages will be delighted to hear that the previously announced Wii title Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two will also be coming to the Wii U console. In this sequel to Warren Spector and Disney Interactive/Junction Point's 2010 twisted take on the world of Disney, Mickey Mouse and Oswald the Lucky Rabbit return to the dark realm of Wasteland, a world of forgotten Disney characters and theme-park attractions. The game's new co-op play has Mickey controlling his magic paintbrush (which sprays paint and thinner) while Oswald wields an electricity-manipulating remote control. In addition to the adventure through the 3D Wasteland, the duo will also encounter puzzle-based 2D stages based on classic Disney cartoons. The Wii U version of the game features gorgeous HD visuals, and the Wii U GamePad controller allows a second player to view the action on its screen, eliminating the need for split-screen play. —PHIL T.

[Below] Behold the power of paint!



Tri, Tri Again!

Capcom's **Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate** is coming to N3DS and Wii U

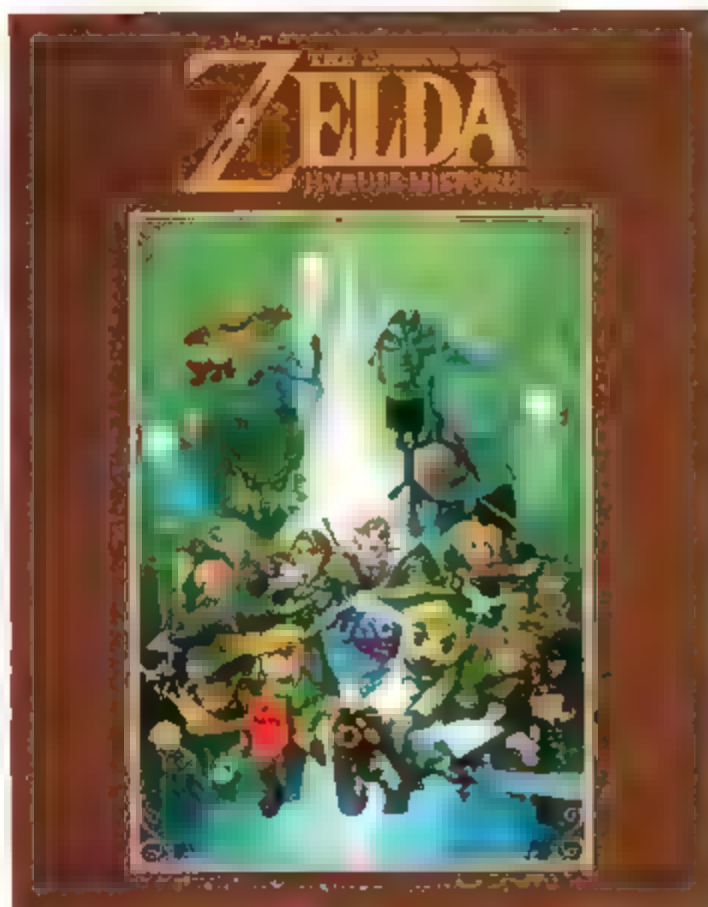


The screens shown here are from the Nintendo 3DS version of **Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate**. Expect the Wii U version to look even better.

GOOD NEWS monster slaying fans: **Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate**, an enhanced edition of Capcom's **Monster Hunter Tri** (originally released for Wii), is coming to the Wii U console and the Nintendo 3DS handheld in March 2013. Armed with a huge array of customizable weapons and gear, up to four players can team up to crack down and defeat massive dinosaur-like creatures, and

the Wii U and N3DS versions will allow for cross-platform cooperative play. In addition, both versions will take advantage of touch-screen functionality to quickly access weapons, books, minigames, and more, and you'll even be able to interchange save data between the two versions so you can maintain your progress whether at home or on the go. —CHRIS H.





THOSE WHO HOLD THE FATE OF THE WORLD IN THEIR HANDS

It was a time when people lived in the darkness, and a time before the name Hyrule was even a thought. The followers of the goddess and those of evil gathered their numbers and battled to win.

The Hero of the Scales raises his sword aloft to the heavens.

LINK

Link is the hero of the story. He is the one who saves the world. He is the one who is the hero of the story. He is the one who is the hero of the story.



Historia Lesson

Take a peek into one of gaming's greatest series with *The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia*.

WANT TO KNOW everything there is to know about the Legend of Zelda series? Then look no further than *The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia*, published by Dark Horse Books. Originally released in Japan last year to help commemorate the series's 25th anniversary, this 274-page hardbound volume presents all the content of its overseas counterpart, now translated into English, along with a new cover and a larger page size. Fans can expect a wealth of

illustrations and concept art from every title in the Zelda series, as well as behind-the-scenes design information, historical series data, and an official chronology of the games.

"There is something for everyone of *The Legend of Zelda* in this book," asserts Patrick Thorpe, editor at Dark Horse. "Fans who have been playing the series since the initial release are going to love the historical aspect of the book and the text pieces by [Zelda creator] Shigeru Miyamoto and

series producer Eiji Aonuma. Newer fans are going to be excited about the large Skyward Sword section and the manga by Akira Himekawa, which contains some really important continuity that impacts the entire series. Personally, I love the character designs. There is so much gorgeous stuff in here—you really can't go wrong. I know that fans are really curious about the game timeline as well. It's in here!"

Thorpe attributes the book's impending North American release directly to the Zelda series's ardent fan base. "When *Hyrule Historia* came out in Japan, the fans came out

in force to let it be known that they wanted an English-language edition of the book," he confirms. "I have no doubt that was instrumental to getting the book over here. I saw wave after wave of online petitions for it! When the book was announced, the fans could not have been more supportive. I just want to let all of the Zelda fans know that every person here at Dark Horse working on the book is also a huge fan of Nintendo and the Legend of Zelda franchise. We are working as hard as we can to deliver the best book possible. It is an honor and a pleasure to be a small link (forgive my pun) in the chain of one of the greatest video game series of all time!"

The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia should be available online and in bookstores this coming January at a suggested price of \$34.99. **CHW:SH**

A WINNER IS...
North American monster
hunters and ace attorneys.



DODONGO DISLIKES...
That all good things must
come to an end.

POWER

TIME
07:26



POWER

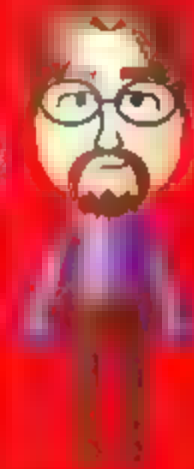


**THAT WAS
AWESOME!**

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO
GAME MOMENTS

**BESSY THE
HEARTLESS HOLSTEIN**

"The Legend of the Mystical Ninja was full of really bizarre and awesome things. The best? Probably the ability to summon a 'terminator cow' that you could ride to trample enemies." —CHRIS H.



STAR POWER

A closer look at the characters we love

Donkey Kong Country
Super NES, 1994

Diddy Kong

Donkey Kong's little buddy is more than just second banana

CAREER GRAPH

Donkey Kong Country



1994
Diddy becomes Donkey Kong's sidekick with the help of his girlfriend Dixie Kong.



1995
Ditches his fellow Kongs to star in his own racing adventure.

1996
Diddy powers up with new abilities and weapons.

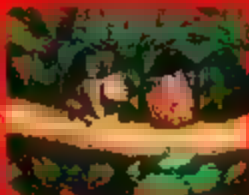


1997
Teams up with Captain Falcon, Captain Olimar, and other heroes to fight the Subspace Army.



2001
Returns to action at Donkey Kong's side—but is once again stuffed into a barrel.

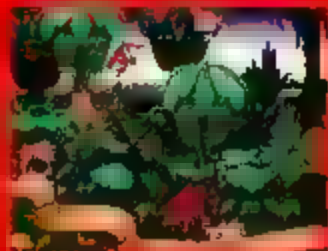
2004
Diddy is captured by the Kremlings.



2005
Diddy is captured by the Kremlings. Diddy Kong returns to action.



OUR FAVORITE DIDDY KONG GAMES



Donkey Kong Country
SNES, 1994
After being on hiatus for many years, Donkey Kong made his long-awaited return in Donkey Kong Country, and he brought his debut along with Diddy Kong. The platformer was excellent, and the young monkey was a perfect fit in the game.



Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
SNES, 1995
With Donkey Kong again supporting the evil Kremlings, Diddy Kong jumped into the spotlight in the sequel to DKC. Teaming up with his friend Dixie Kong, Diddy embarked on an adventure that was more varied and challenging than the previous game.



Super Smash Bros. Brawl
Wii, 2008
Boasting refined four-player fighting, a massive story mode, and an unprecedented lineup of all-star characters, Super Smash Bros. Brawl just might be the best installment of the popular series. Diddy Kong is one of the game's new characters; he soars into the air with his Rocketbarrel and blasts adversaries with his peanut cannon.



Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze
Wii U, 2016
The latest DKC game is a fine reward to form for the beloved series. Familiar gameplay and story elements combine with fresh playability to deliver a must-have platformer. Diddy is playable only in co-op mode, but he certainly shines in single-player action; he travels and backtracks in a manner



Wreck-less Behavior

The creators of *Wreck-It Ralph* unlock the secrets behind the upcoming movie

LAST ISSUE We were introduced to *Wreck-It Ralph*, the upcoming movie from Walt Disney Animation Studios. In it, Ralph (voiced by John C. Reilly) is the star of a fictional '80s arcade game. Tired of playing the foil to the game's star, Fix-It Felix Jr. (Jack McBrayer), Ralph abandons his game on a quest to become a hero. His journey leads him into a sci-fi first-person shooter where he meets Sergeant Calhoun (Jane Lynch), and a cartoonish kart racer where he befriends the troublesome Vanellope von Schweetz (Sarah Silverman).

We recently talked with *Wreck-It*

Ralph director Rich Moore and producer Clark Spencer. Moore was quick to point out that he was qualified to direct *Wreck-It Ralph* based on his love of video games. "I'm a geek, was part of that generation that was the first to have games in our life. He then spent the rest of our interview reminiscing about his favorite games, including classics like *Centipede*, *Marble Madness*, *O'Bert*, *Sinistar*, and *Dragon's Lair*. Gaming is still one of Moore's favorite hobbies, with just a hint of guilt in his voice, he confesses, "I'm working during the day on a movie about video games,

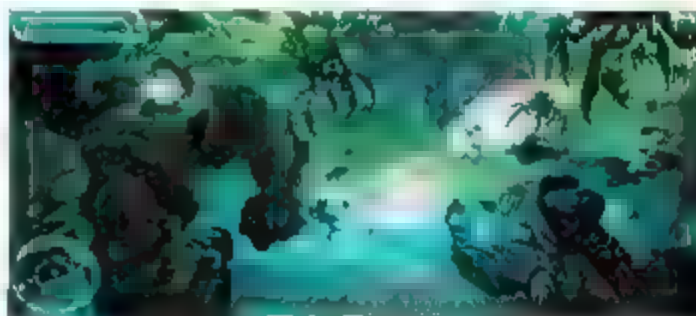
and now I'm going home and playing games for five hours."

In *Wreck-It Ralph*, audiences see three different game worlds—the

8-bit Fix-It Felix, the FPS Hero's Duty and the kart racer *Sugar Rush*. For a time, Spencer reveals, Ralph was going to visit another game, *Extreme Easy Living 2* would have been "Sims meets Grand Theft Auto done Disney-style." The scene was cut because the filmmakers felt that four different worlds would distract audiences from the story.

Ralph's creators were also concerned about moviegoers becoming distracted by too many classic game characters—including Bowser and Sonic—making cameo appearances. To fight their urge to focus too much on those cameos at the expense of Ralph's journey, the crew cut out all of them, then perfected the story, and reworked the licensed characters back into the film in ways that supported the narrative.

When confronted with the big question—whether *Wreck-It Ralph* or *Donkey Kong* would win a fight between the two—however, Spencer is noncommittal. He replies, "Wow, that's a tough one. Ralph has pretty big fists, but DK has the raw gorilla power." Although we doubt that it was a true peek at things to come, Spencer did get our imaginations working when he said, "It would be interesting to see. Maybe in a short..." As excited as we are about that possibility, we're just typed to see *Wreck-It Ralph* when it hits theaters on November 2. **PHIL T**

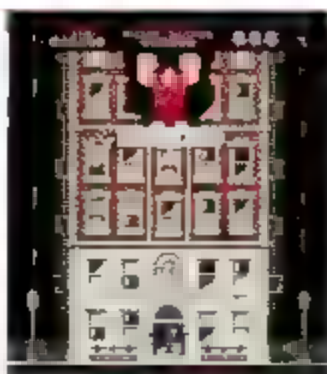


FIX-IT FELIX FEVER

Movie studios spare no expense to advertise their upcoming releases. Disney has come up with a very unique way to bring people into the world of *Wreck-It Ralph*—a fully playable arcade game.

This isn't a typical licensed movie game, however. It's a full-fledged re-creation of the Fix-It Felix Jr. game seen in the movie, complete with early-'80s graphics and sound effects. The game has the player controlling Felix, who is tasked

with repairing the "The Great Eastern Building" that is being wrecked by Ralph. Felix moves from window to window, and a quick tap of the fix button mends any broken glass. Meanwhile, Ralph pams the top of the screen, pounding his fists and causing deadly bricks to fall. As the levels progress, barriers appear to block Felix's path, obstacles must be jumped, and flying birds must be dodged. Like most early arcade games, there is no true ending to Fix-It Felix Jr.; players simply try to earn the high score.



with the same "Save the World" theme. It's an accurate and enjoyable riff on the classic coin-op days, but the cabinets in which the game is housed lend to the retro feel. The cabinet artwork is highly reminiscent of Nintendo's *Donkey Kong* arcade game, and the machines have been weathered to make them look as though they've been sitting in bowling alleys since 1983. The Fix-It Felix arcade games have already made appearances at conventions and other special events, and they should be showing up in movie theaters later this year.



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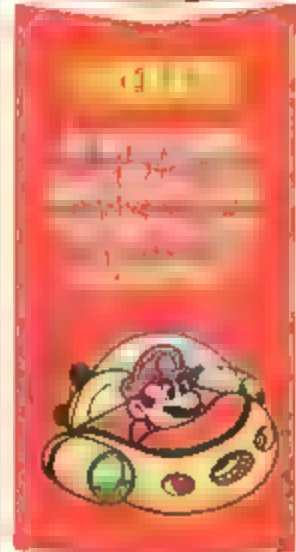


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POWER
QUIZ

HARDCORE
In the original
Mega Man
series, which
two robot
masters can
transform into
vehicles?



Something for Everyone

NEWS
from
JAPAN

Japan's late-August Nintendo Direct presentation detailed a diverse release slate for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

WITH ALL EYES on the upcoming Wii U console, Nintendo of Japan held a meaty Nintendo Direct presentation to try to divert some attention back to the Nintendo 3DS lineup. Surprisingly, the presentation debuted new versions of nearly all of the breakthrough casual games that made the Nintendo DS such a

hit with mainstream consumers. It will be interesting to see if brands like Brain Age, Style Savvy, Friend Collection, and Art Academy can bring the same alternative audiences to 3DS that they did to its predecessor.

Fortunately, these titles don't seem to be coming at the expense of traditional games. The most pleasant surprise of the program may have been the debut of **Rhythm Hunter: Harmoknight**, a new action/rhythm title by Pokémon developer Game Freak in this fast-paced title

players must jump and attack foes in tune to the game's music to clear 50 stages comprising eight worlds. That's a nice chunk of content for an eShop game that costs only around \$20. Nintendo also showed off more of the new **Animal Crossing** game for 3DS. This installment is looking like a control freak's dream, with deep customization features that even allow players to redesign furniture and create their own fabric patterns for clothing. On a macro level, players can impose ordinances on their towns, such as requiring stores to stay open late or flowers to grow in place of weeds.

There were plenty of big third-party games on display, too. Level-5 CEO Akihiro Hino announced a new chapter in his company's flagship series, **Professor Layton and the Legacy of Super-Civilization A**. This will be last game to feature Layton in the lead role, but Hino promised Layton's sendoff would be a world-spanning adventure on a scale never before seen in the series. Finally, Capcom announced that the hotly anticipated **Monster Hunter 4** would be playable at this year's Tokyo Game Show, and unveiled a new weapon that's scheduled to debut in that installment: a staff that summons energy-draining insects. Bet you didn't see that one coming! —CASEY L.



WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

5

YEARS AGO



Games rarely get better than Super Mario Galaxy for the Wii console. In the October 2007 issue of Nintendo Power we had the chance to venture deep into Mario's interstellar adventure for the first time and experience the thrills of visiting various planets, running around spherical worlds, and feeling the magnificent effects of gravity. Even after five years, Super Mario Galaxy is one of the best games on the system. Speaking of fantastic Wii games the issue contained a review of Metroid Prime 3: Corruption on as well, which scored a perfect 10.

10

YEARS AGO

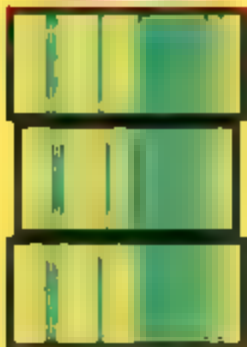


Who's the foxy lady? Why, it's Krystal. Fox McCloud's disturbingly popular costar in Star Fox Adventures for GameCube. Originally planned for Nintendo 64, the long-awaited Legend of Zelda-esque game finally landed in late 2002, grabbing a substantial feature in Nintendo Power vol. 16. Also included in that issue were tips on Super Mario Sunshine and Animal Crossing, and an article on the short-lived e-Reader accessory for Game Boy Advance which let you play classic NES games by scanning cards. Kudos if you remember that one!

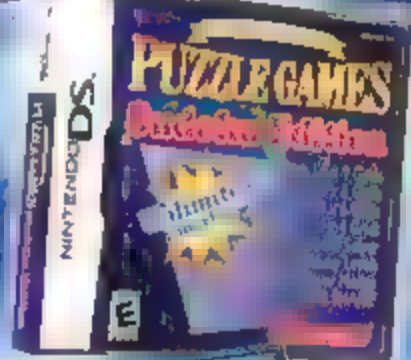


20

YEARS AGO



Clear the roads! The genre-defining original on Mario Kart adorned the cover of Nintendo Power vol. 41 and as Mario and his fellow competitors plowed in a nine-page feature article, they weren't going a slow down for anybody. In fact, they've pretty much been driving at full speed ever since. The issue also featured the Game Boy version of Bionic Commando, unique Super NES adventure Out of This World, and the visually impressive but disappointing The Simpsons: Bart's Nightmare.



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Snake's Special

Collectibles don't come any tougher than this Play Arts Kai action figure of supersoldier Solid Snake (who appeared in *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* for GameCube). Standing more than 10" tall, the highly articulated figure includes multiple weapons and alternate hands. The suggested price is \$60.



Classic Couple

Sonic and Amy, sittin' in a tree... OK, maybe not, but Blue Blur fans still won't want to miss out on Jazwares's Sonic the Hedgehog comic-book two-pack, which includes classic Sonic, classic Amy (sporting her original Sonic CD attire), and a copy of Archie Comics's *Sonic the Hedgehog* #226.



Koopa Shells Not Included

Kart-racing fans, start your motors! Manufactured by Goldie International, these Mario Kart Wii Mini Radio Control Karts will let you zip to the finish line or race around the room using the included wireless remotes. Two versions—Mario and Yoshi—are available.



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- 1 Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
- 2 Paper Mario: Sticker Star
- 3 Animal Crossing*
- 4 Fire Emblem*
- 5 Scribblenauts Unlimited



- 1 Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
- 2 LEGO The Lord of the Rings
- 3 Skylanders Giants
- 4 Wreck-It Ralph
- 5 Just Dance 4



- 1 New Super Mario Bros. U
- 2 Pikmin 3
- 3 Nintendo Land
- 4 Scribblenauts Unlimited
- 5 Game & Wario

MINTEMP 温度 20.0

[illegible]

Scouty Scoutly Brat ♥

Transformers: Play- the Game	Action/Sci-Fi	10/12
The Beach Pack	Adventure	10/12
Word Wizard 2.0	Strategy	10/12
Whack It Again	Action/Adventure	10/12
Wild Escape	Action	10/12
Worms 3: The New Adventure	Strategy	10/12

Ben 10: Omniverse	4/3	TV-12
Big Time Rush	Cartoon Network	TV-14
Cabela's Hunting Expeditions	Acorn Media	TV-14
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	TV-12
Just Dance: Denver Party	Ubisoft	TV-12
Karaoke Jukebox	Konami	TV-12
ESQ The End of the Ring	Warner Bros.	TV-12
Monster High Skullimate Rober Mazza	Little Orbit	TV-12
Nickelodeon Dance 2	2K Play	TV-12
Rise of the Guardians: The Golden Age	DC	TV-12
Shredders: Guts	Activision	TV-12
Transformers Prime: The Game	Activision	TV-12
Yogi Berra: Taking the Lead	DC	TV-12
Wreck-It Ralph	Disney	TV-12
WWE 13	Yuke	TV-12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	TV-12

WILLIAM

Atkins	Saga	TEA
Colonial Marines		
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	WGA
Batman: Arkham City-- Uncut Edition	Warner Bros.	WGA
Web 20: Commerce	Q3	WGA
Call of Duty: Black Ops 3	Activision	WGA
Darksiders II	THQ	WGA
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Friendship	Disney	WGA
Family Party 3D Great Savage Olympic Arcade	Q3	WGA
FFIX: Specier II	Electronic Arts	WGA
Game & Wario*	Nintendo	TEA
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	TEA
Jazz 'n' Rollin'	Motivation	WGA
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	WGA
LEGO City Undercover	Nintendo	WGA
Madden NFL 13	Electronic Arts	WGA
Marvel's Avengers Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	WGA
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	WGA

U.S. # Number 3

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MINTEENDO 02

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Bag Time Beach	GameBlow	10/12
Brat: Fashion Boutique	Activision	10/12
Calamity Carnival: Game	Activision	10/12
CHS: The Lord of the Rings	Warner Bros.	10/12
Monster High Spiritscape: Bites: Maze	Little Orbit	11/12
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Wrecked: Bobbie Guppies: Theme Park	2K Play	10/12
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Wreck: & Rumble: Little Orbit	Little Orbit	10/12

"IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS."

—OLD MAN, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA, 1987



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Burn, Baby, Burn!

Kids, don't try this at home! **Little Inferno** for Wii U promises to bring out the arsonist in all of us.



THE ONE OF the first lessons that we're taught as children: don't play with fire. How amusing it is, then, that here is now a video game in which players are encouraged to do nothing but. *Little Inferno* is the brainchild of Tomorrow Corporation, an indie development studio composed of some of the minds behind the WiiWare hit *World of Goo* and Nintendo's gem *Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure*. And it's coming soon to the Wii U console as a downloadable title.

When we say that you play with fire in *Little Inferno*, that's about as accurate of a gameplay description as you can get. As the game begins, you're starting into a little *inferno* Entertainment Fireplace, where the bulk of the action takes place. It is here that you will be satiating your pyromaniacal tendencies. Pointing the Wii Remote at the screen allows you to generate a small flame wherever you wish. Of course, there is little to burn in an empty fireplace, so you'll need to find some fuel for the flame. Since there's no

log-gathering minigame, there's just one option: torch all of your worldly possessions.

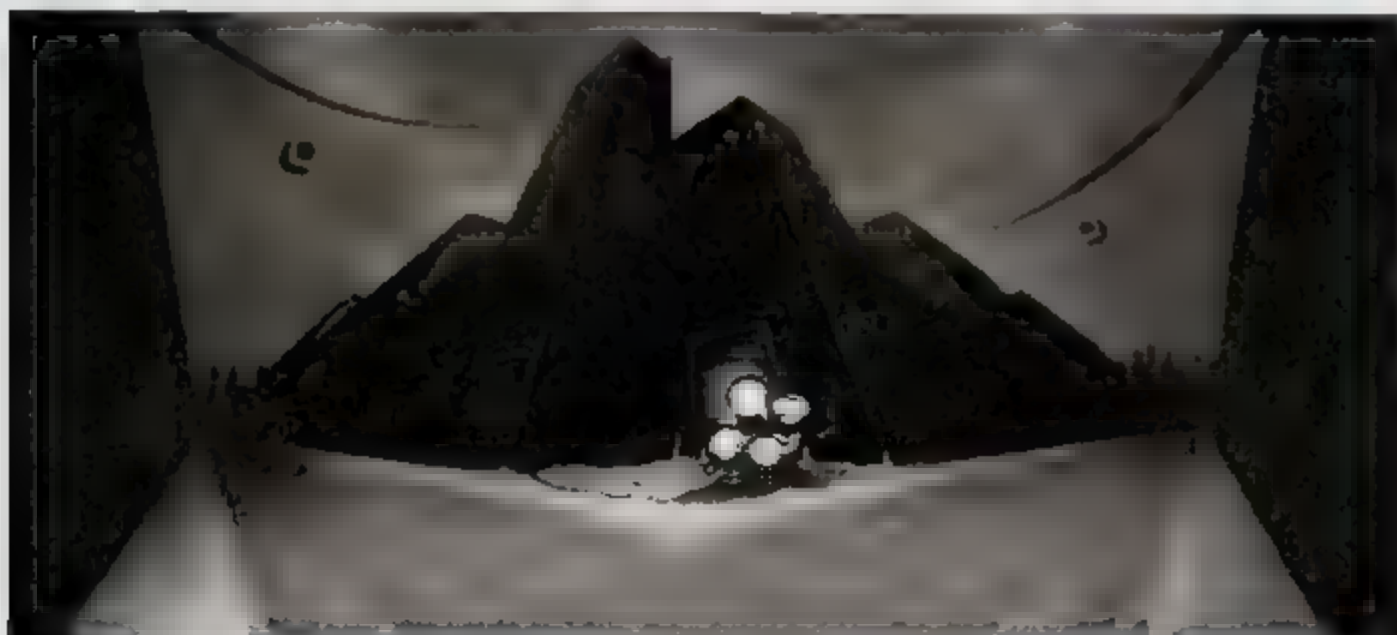
Luckily, there are plenty of flammable items to be found in the game's initial catalog. Just flip open these books and drop a few coins to have a new piece of tinder delivered to your door. The objects generate points as you burn



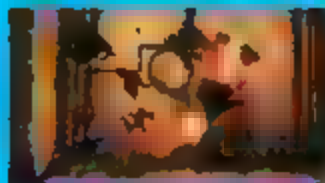
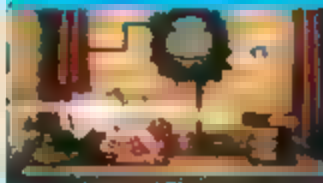
them, giving you the resources to order additional goodies. The more stuff you buy, the more catalogs are unlocked, and the process begins anew.

It sounds a bit mindless, doesn't it? The simple premise, however, conceals a deeper subject. As you play, a story begins to reveal itself through letters received from such characters as your neighbor, a hyperactive ita girl named Sugar Plum, whose messages slowly go from goofy to introspective and somewhat creepy. Additionally, the

appropriately named Weather Man provides updates on the current climate, which has the oddest for the entire game. In the world of *Little Inferno*, it has become increasingly cold. Snow falls endlessly from the sky, and it has grown more and more difficult to stay warm. This has led to the "rule" of burning anything and everything, which will take to fire. In fact, the most popular kid's toy is currently the aforementioned *Little Inferno* Entertainment Fireplace. It's a weird, slightly dark story, and it only gets weirder and darker as you



SOMETHING BURNING

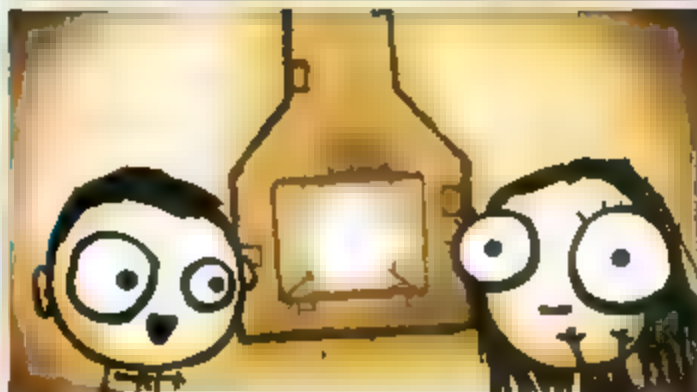


progress.

It's worth noting that most of the items don't simply burn—the fire affects many of the objects in unusual ways. A toy oil tanker, for example, will catch fire quickly and begin to spout flames as it heats up. A seed packet will explode, sending its contents flying around the fireplace. The seeds quickly sprout into flowers, which will also begin to burn. When the oddly adorable Kitty Kitty Poo Poo Plushie burns, it becomes so startled that it fills the fireplace with...well, with what you might expect. Don't worry, though: tossing

a small nuclear device in the fire will clear everything out in a hurry.

In a very "oh, the developers are going to get in trouble for this" twist, you can pick up the burning objects and toss them around the screen. Some of them are quite fragile, so if they're flung with enough force, you'll end up with flaming shrapnel all over the screen. Messing around with the object physics adds an entertaining dimension to the game. It's fun seeing how items react when interacted with. You may not have to build a little house out of those wooden blocks before igniting them,

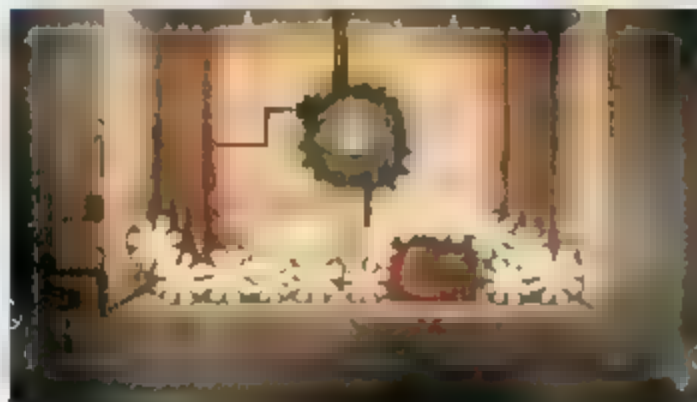
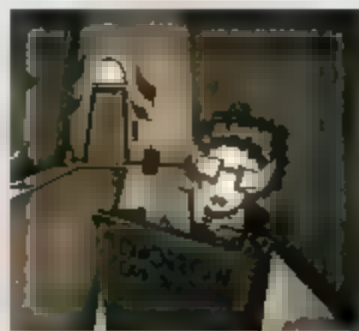


but it sure is more satisfying to watch them burn that way. Kyle Gabler, one of Little Inferno's creators, says that the intention is to allow the player to explore without leaving the fireplace setting.

Exploration comes into play with Little Inferno's secondary goal: forming combos. Dozens of clues hint at random items that can be placed in the fireplace together and burned for extra cash and for stamps (which help speed delivery of your mail orders). It's not terribly difficult to find effective combinations at the start of the game, when there's only one catalog of goods available to choose from, but it gets far trickier when more options open up.

Little Inferno is as much an electronic play set as it is a video game. Gabler wants it to replicate the feeling of wonder that one got in the old days when discovering

a new secret in a video game, and the experimental nature of Little Inferno's gameplay really lends itself to that. Factor in an aesthetic that ranges from cute to disturbing (why are those dolls screaming as they burn?), and you end up with one of the most intriguing titles coming to Wii U. If all goes according to plan, it will be available upon the system's launch, so you can look forward to getting your flame on soon. —PHIL T



Burning Men

NINTENDO POWER Little Inferno's premise is certainly unique. Where did the idea come from? Is there something that you're hoping to say with the story?

KYLE GRAY The movie *Psycho* famously makes you think it's going to be about a nice little lady and a nice little robbery, and the plot slaps you in the chest and becomes a murder. The same movie universe makes you think it's going to be a murder conspiracy, but then it ends up being a really sweet story about falling back in love.

We were thinking if we could do something like this with a game. You can play with your nice warm fire for hours and days. But something else is happening.

What do you think is the appeal of burning things?

KYLE GRAY Burning things has a primitive, cavemanlike appeal. It's like shopping. Now with Little Inferno, you can do both at the same time.

There isn't much in the way of instruction for the player in Little Inferno. What challenges are

there in urging the player to keep moving forward?

DAVE I miss the good old days when you switched on a game and you were ready to go. There were no big pre-rendered cinematics, there were no patronizing tutorials to walk through. There were no images in a game controller with a spider web of arrows and instructions pointing to each button. They thrust you into a game, and I just thought you were smart enough and clever enough to figure it out on your own.

I felt like an explorer playing games 20 years ago. What happens if you get all the sea lions in *Link's Awakening*? Why am I getting a can of dog food for other things? What is the nature of the world in *Space Quest*? I had myself a deserted city with a little machine, a bobo rabbit, and no instructions.

There was a whole world in those old games. They followed their own logic. They were confident with their idiosyncrasies and never felt they had to explain themselves. And that's been one of our design goals: The player is smart and clever, and our game should respect them by not

explaining everything. It's up to the player to explore a world that has been there long before they ever showed up, and will still be there after they leave.

What influenced the game's visual style?

GRAY That's just Kyle's visual style. If you broke both of Kyle's hands and he had to hold a pencil with his teeth, Little Inferno would still look the same.

What did you learn from the development of World of Goo that you were able to bring to Little Inferno?

DAVE With World of Goo, I learned that being an independent developer is totally possible. You don't need hundreds of employees and millions of dollars to make a game like the big studios. We were just two guys with laptops. With Little Inferno, we're three guys with laptops, and we're still just as clueless and learning as we go.

This game was originally being developed for Wii. What prompted the switch to Wii U?

GRAY We let the game determine the platform. Little Inferno was a better fit on a Tegra handheld or a Casio wristwatch we totally port it there. But the Wii Remotes make great little pokers.

What differences have you noticed between developing a game for Wii versus Wii U?

DAVE Wii U is definitely a major upgrade over Wii. For Little Inferno, that means we're able

to crank up the interactivity and destructibility of the toys you burn. In your fire and also include more of them.

Will the game feature any specific Wii U features? Will it utilize the GamePad screen in any way?

DAVE We'd love to have a little mushroom shop where you can buy and burn Nintendo characters. Just to make sure Princess Peach would be murdered.

What is your favorite item in the game to burn? Why?

DAVE My wife and one year old son demand to see *Kelly Kelly Poo Poo* at every opportunity.

DAVE The Slinging Machine. She breaks her leg and champagne glasses.

DAVE The Chain Thrower. It's powered by a barrel of gasoline and a basket of hot fires. It's point away from me and towards a guy.

What is your favorite item in real life to burn? Why?

DAVE I try not to burn my items. I can't. Exceptions are bin bags though when my inventory gets too full.

DAVE I have quite the collection of sneakers and shoes.

DAVE When I was 12, I made a model city with some friends. We burned and then we lit the buildings with gas. Roman candle-style fireworks. Fortunately, no model citizens were harmed.

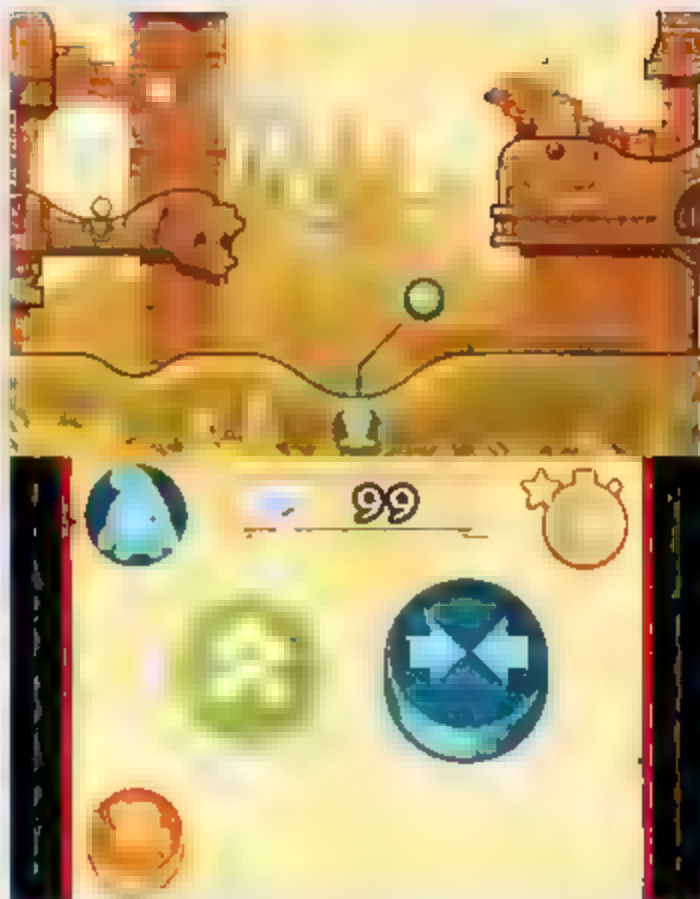
Are you afraid that parents' groups might complain about the game's "play with fire" premise?

DAVE Little Inferno is a little fun for the whole family. We encourage players who can't see the difference between fiction and reality to not play any video games or watch any movies ever. Otherwise they'll believe guns are fun toys, sling shooting birds is totally cool, eating forest mushrooms will double your size, and action sequences take place in glorious slow motion.

Any final thoughts on the game?

DAVE Little Inferno is a little game with a big server. If you already know, please don't spoil it to others! Tomorrow Corporation hopes you enjoy the game, and remember the future is tomorrow.





New Wave

Slippery sequel *Fluidity: Spin Cycle* prepares to splash down in the Nintendo eShop.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING to complain about regarding the liquid-themed WiiWare puzzle-adventure game *Fluidity*, it's that I didn't have much personality. Sure, it featured an innovative concept, and the tilt-based controls were intuitive and effective, but a puddle of water is not exactly the most compelling protagonist slacking that didn't

stop *Fluidity* from achieving critical acclaim, nor did it stop publisher Nintendo and developer Curve



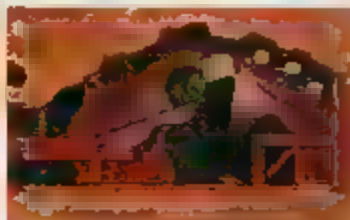
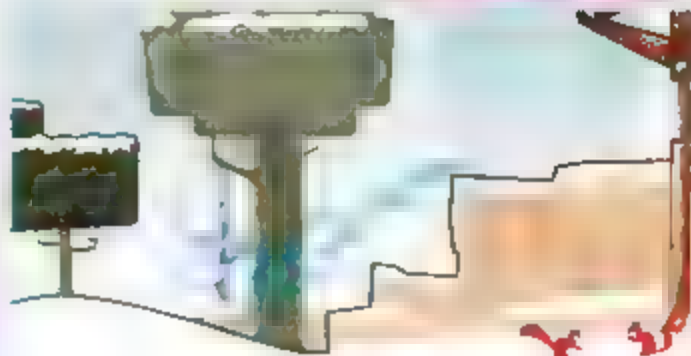
Studios from moving forward with a sequel. *Fluidity: Spin Cycle* is on its way to the Nintendo 3DS handheld via the Nintendo eShop and promises to deliver the same type of fun as its predecessor, while adding new features and a whole lot more character.

Rather than a mere puddle, *Fluidity: Spin Cycle* puts you in control of Eddy, a benevolent Water Spirit who resides in a wizard's study. The wizard, using magical Rainbow Spirits, has given life to the pages of a captivating picture book; unfortunately, when the

wizard isn't looking, an evil dark magic entity known as Goop breaks free from his bottle and proceeds to infect the enchanted tome. Fearing for the Rainbow Spirits' well-being, Eddy also escapes his container and enters the book to stop Goop's evil influence.

Despite being a sentient creature, Eddy behaves a lot like your standard variety H₂O, or, once the action begins, initially, he doesn't have many skills; you primarily move him around the environments by tilting the N3DS system a few degrees to the left or the right, which allows him to move through pipes, trickie down openings, and push past doors, if the system enough, and you can even move up inclines. Additionally, you can activate switches after you've formed a pool over them and jump on command by pressing L or R.

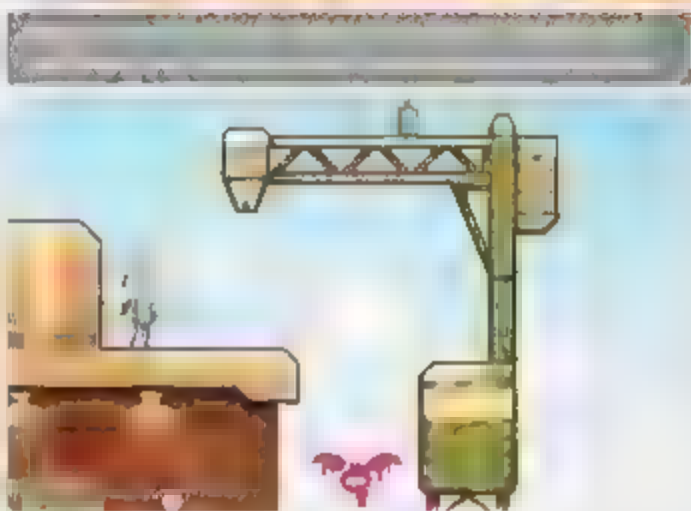
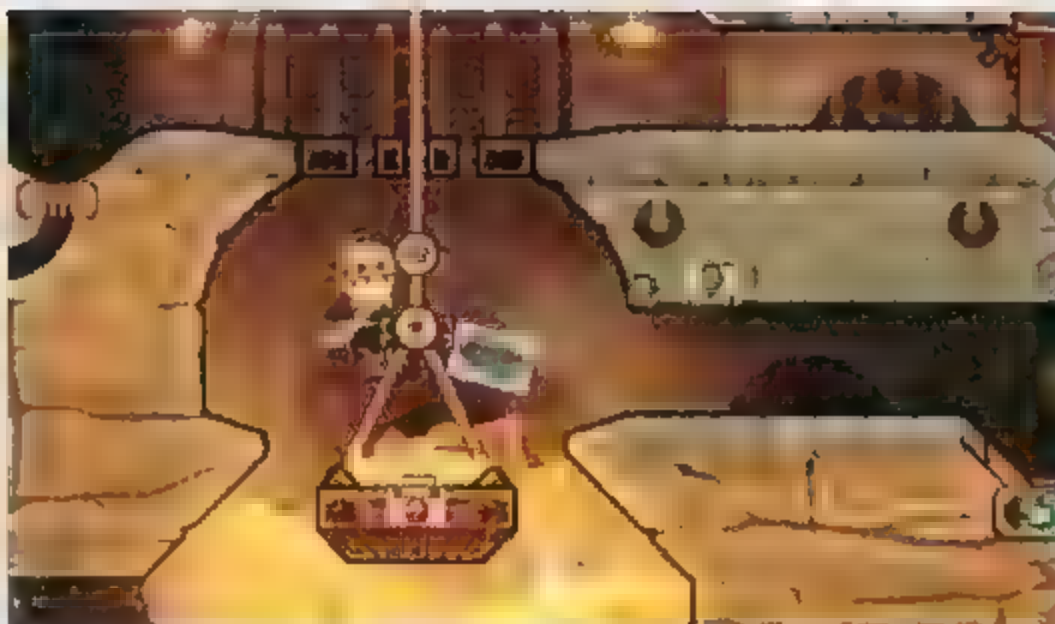
That might not sound thrilling at





first, but interesting level design ensures there's plenty of excitement to be had. You'll ride waterwheels, make flowers bloom, carry gears into position to activate machinery, use spraying devices to reach otherwise-inaccessible locations, help goldfish reach their fishbowls, trave up the backs of dinosaurs, dodge flaming dragon breath, and more. In some spots you'll have to use well-timed movements to avoid falling into absorbent sand traps, and in others you'll even be able to manipulate gravity or trigger complex series of switches to maneuver objects into place—whatever it takes to reach the Rainbow Spirit at the end of each stage. Furthermore, certain areas require you to do more than merely tilt your N3DS system. In these levels you're given 360 degrees of control, so you may end up turning your system sideways or completely upside down in order to navigate particularly labyrinthine areas.

Even more gameplay options open up as the game progresses. Like in the original *Fluidity*, before long you'll earn new abilities, such as the power to gather your particles together for easier movement, and the ability to erupt with an explosive splash—great for

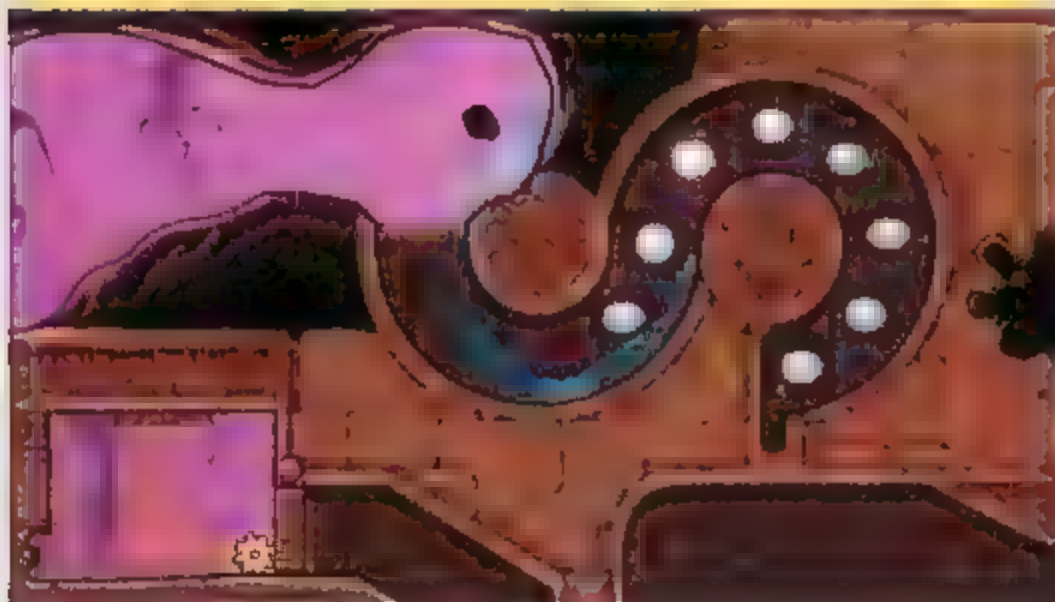


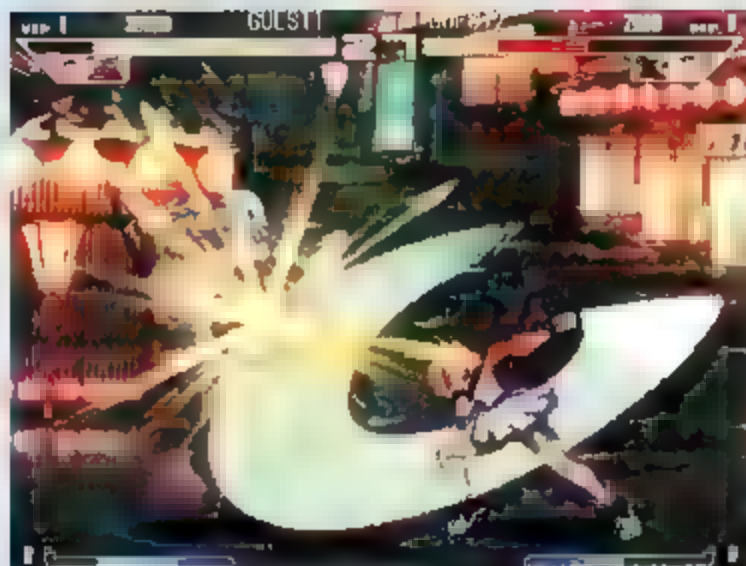
pushing obstacles out of the way or smashing through weak walls to reach hidden areas. Eventually you'll also learn to charge forms at

designated spots—into a block of ice or a cloud of vapor. Naturally you'll have completely different abilities in different states, as

For instance, you'll be able to bounce off of springs and slam into pressure-based switches to activate them. Plus, you won't have to worry about falling when crossing floors, as they're riddled with small gaps. Figuring out when a charge forms and make use of each one's powers is critical to solving many of the game's puzzles.

Eddy's quest will take you through multiple colorfully-themed worlds, each with numerous stages, including challenging boss battles. And although the game doesn't offer the massive, interconnected, nonlinear environments of its predecessor, you'll often want to revisit earlier levels after earning new abilities so you can use them to find secret puzzle pieces that unlock bonus "play room" levels. That adds up to a whole lot of content and replay value in what could be one of the best titles to hit the eShop this year. —CHRIS H.





Smash Indie Hits

A three-man team hosts hardcore 2D fighting on the Nintendo eShop.

WAY BACK WHEN, a few people could get together and make a hit video game. Then the industry decided that much, much bigger was better, and it seemed like the days of scrappy garage developers were gone. Time flows like a river, though, and history repeats. Now we're living in a whole new era of big things from tiny teams: things

like *Vatagarasu*, a Nintendo 3DS fighter made by just three talented guys.

Vatagarasu, which will likely be retitled for its American release, made a splash in Japan last year as a "doujin game," an amateur PC production sold in short runs at tournaments, comic conventions, and



other otaku gatherings. Nica is the American publisher that brought Cave Story to Nintendo systems, saw potential in the PC game and plans to release an N3DS conversion soon.

Fans of the PC version compare the gameplay to classic competitive 2D fighting games such as Super Street Fighter II Turbo, Garou: Mark of the Wolves, and Street Fighter Third Strike. The button layout

follows the SNK style, using four commands for basic punches and kicks, but the pairing and system designs have more of a Capcom feel. The joystick motions for special moves use familiar Street Fighter conventions: quarter circles, half circles, the old Dragon Punch zig-zag. Each character has one Super Special move to distill when his energy meter fills up, plus an extra powerful version to trigger with a modified button command.

Street Fighter X's influence shows up in some very particular places. Players can choose to amp up one special move for each match, comparable to the Super Arts selection in Capcom's game, and a similar set of parry techniques are critical to muller on defense. Advanced players can pull off a special parry called Block Locking, which allows a fighter with perfect timing to briefly freeze an opponent and leave that foe open for a counterpunch.



Yaggy asu's roster includes eight diverse warriors, plus a hidden boss. An oddball setting gives the crew a diabolical and visual flavor they're fighting the way across a fanasy take on '90s

Japan, and they reflect a diverse set of play styles. From various 2D fighters of the past, if you like fireball-losing heroes, Gyo-Kou and Crow, and grappling fans can try Chada, the big wrestling

bruiser. Guile partisans have Hina, a charge-hawker who can speed freaks can bounce around the screen with yuzumaru. All agree: combo chaining is fun. For players of a very specific her, there's at least several online enthusiasts say it's a dead ringer gameplaywise for today, the beloved British gentleman pugilist from Street III.

Developer Circle Edge.com has seen three creators: Tomoyuki Saito, Koan, and a list on full-fledged, like Bara and The King of Fighters. Nominally, Tomoyuki Saito, an SNK designer and avid SFF. Third Strike competitor and Shizuo Shizuo, an engineer responsible for the guts of Yaggy asu. Together, they've already brought the PC game through four major version updates and many smaller adjustments, continually tweaking the balance and gameplay features, which should make for fair head-to-head battles in the N-Ds game's local wireless multiplayer mode.

They're not doing every little thing on their own, though, in an unusual twist for a fighting game. Yaggy asu features a boatload of optional audio commentary designed to recreate the arcade flash-back experience recorded by a top player and streaming commentary from the Japanese Street Fighter scene. Meeting certain conditions might trigger congratulations, a cutting scene, or some commentary out there bit of voice over hidden away as an Easter egg.

Nica hasn't quite nailed down a release date or an official title for the Nintendo 3DS version, but you can already check out videos of the game online. After all, it might not hurt to study up a bit to get an edge on the competition.

DAVID J.



Pretty as a Picture



Following in the footsteps of its DSiWare predecessor, photo-augmentation software Sparkle Snapshots 3D is on its way to the Nintendo eShop for use with the Nintendo 3DS handheld. The program enables you to select what type of lens filter to use (normal, sharp, or soft), then take photos of yourself or your friends and enhance them with all types of special effects. You can set your images against numerous 2D or 3D backgrounds (including an elegant bedroom, a field of flowers, and an array of desserts), apply frames or foreground effects (such as confetti or a musical keyboard), then get artistic with a vast assortment of pens, stickers, ribbons, text, 3D artwork, and more; you'll even be able to download additional decorations. And though the application is aimed primarily at a female audience, Mario-themed content ensures that there's a little something for everybody. Sparkle Snapshots 3D should be available in the eShop on October 18. —CHRIS M



Dirty Little Bonus

There are already a lot of reasons to like downloadable platformer Mutant Mudds for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. Soon there will be 20 more—arriving in the form of a free update available in the Nintendo eShop. Featuring content from the recently released PC version of Mutant Mudds, the update will add 20 new challenging Grannie levels, which enable you to take control of main character Max's high-flying grandmother. Developer Renegade Kid expects the update to be available before the end of the year. —CHRIS M



EVALUATION STATION

3DS DOWNLOAD



3D SOLITAIRE

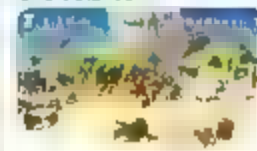
DEV: SPARKLE STUDIOS
GEN: CARD GAME
PRIC: \$2.99

As advertised, this is a game of solitaire, and it is in stereoscopic 3D—but you don't get much more than that. As you might suspect, a handful of 3D backgrounds doesn't add a whole lot to the traditional playing-card affair, and there are very few modes or useful features (the Undo button lets you go back only one move), but at least you can select from either traditional or touch-screen controls. It's serviceable if you're looking for solitaire on Nintendo 3DS—just don't expect anything special.

—CHRIS M



3DS DOWNLOAD



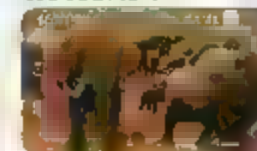
CRAZY CHICKEN: PIRATES 3D

PUBLISHER: TRYON
GEN: SHOOTER
PRIC: \$1.99

Given its title, you would be forgiven for thinking that this is one of the best games ever. Sadly, this isn't the case. Instead, it's a bland shooting gallery that has the feel of a 10-year-old Flash game. Its (horrible) canned animations, unchanging layout, and single main level ensure that you will have seen pretty much everything this game has to offer with the minute-and-a-half time limit you're given to play it. Without the means to compare high scores with your friends, the game is rendered pointless. —PHIL T



3DS DOWNLOAD



OUTDOORS UNLEASHED: AFRICA 3D

DEV: SPARKLE STUDIOS
GEN: SHOOTER
PRIC: \$2.99

Hunting games tend to fall into one of two categories: sims (which involve hiding and sneaking) and shooting galleries (which involve showers of shell casings). Outdoors Unleashed falls neatly into the second category. Fortunately, solid production values and the dangling carrot of unlockable gear upgrades make for a fairly engaging shooting gallery. Of course, you'll have to decide for yourself whether the game's mass-slaughter approach to hunting floats your boat. —PATRICK C



3DS DOWNLOAD



SPEEDX 3D

PUBLISHER: GAMELOVE STUDIOS
GEN: RACER
PRIC: \$2.99

A racer planted firmly in the hypnotic school of gaming, Speedx 3D tasks players with navigating obstacles as they spin around the inside of a tunnel. A variety of environmental challenges—as well as the tunnel's penchant for flattening into a plane only to eventually deposit players on the exterior of the “tube”—keep things fresh. But the casual difficulty, atmospheric music, and decidedly trippy animation suggest that GameLove is more interested in creating an experience than in making just another racing game. —PATRICK C



3DS DOWNLOAD



TOUCH BATTLE TANK 3D

DEV: ALC
GEN: ACTION
PRIC: \$4.99

A remarkably Spartan game, Touch Battle Tank 3D offers tiny environments filled with battling tanks. That's it. Gameplay requires players to destroy all enemy tanks before moving on to the next stage, which—invariably—is essentially the same as the previous stage. It's rudimentary arcade action stuffed down your gullet and nausea, which can work, but not when saddled with inadequate AI and suspect aiming controls (stylus-based, in the worst way).

—PATRICK C



3DS DOWNLOAD



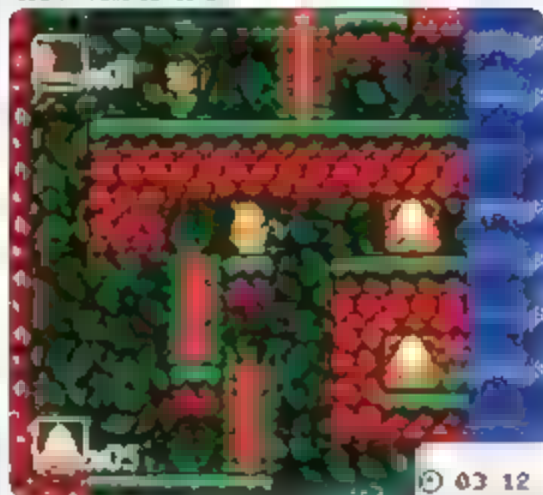
VECTORA RACING

PUBLISHER: ALC SYSTEM WORKS
GEN: RACER
PRIC: \$8.99

At first glance, VectorRacing seems promising. The game's wire-frame graphics give it a delightfully retro appearance, there's a varied selection of vehicles to choose from, and the controls are smooth enough. Unfortunately, the racing itself is pretty basic and bland. For starters, the tracks are lifeless, without any obstacles or textures, most stages feel more or less the same. There aren't any pickups either, so the only way to get ahead is to meticulously run over the green arrows that boost your speed. —BOB M



DS WARE



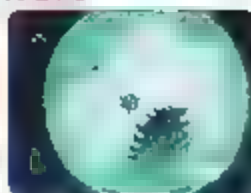
TOKI TORI

PLA. DS WARE GAMI NOY COLOR 72 X 12 2001
PUBLISHED BY TWO TIGERS/CAPCOM 53 00

In this adorable puzzle-platformer, you play as the titular chick who's on a mission to save his unhatched brethren. Since Toki Tori isn't the athletic type, each level provides you with a limited set of tools such as bridges, teleporters, and ice rays, which you must employ strategically to collect the eggs and avoid getting stuck. The game's puzzles are bite-sized and fun, and the gradual introduction of new items keeps you hooked. —CODY M.

Recommended

DS WARE



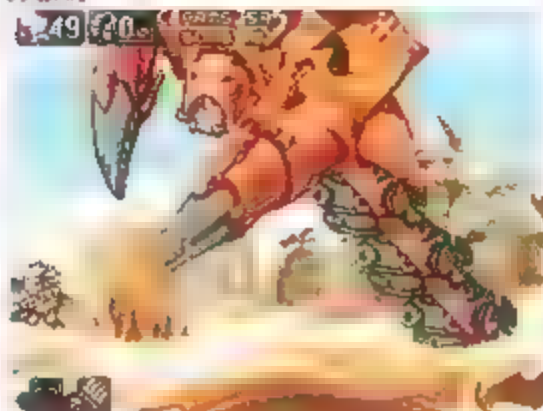
ABYSS

PUB. DS WARE ENJOYUP
GEN. ACTION
PRIC. 200 POINTS/\$1.00

In Abyss, you guide a squid-like creature to collect orbs of light present through out underwater mazes. Maneuvering the murky depths requires precise movement of your cephalopod, which is made possible by the game's tight controls. Although avoiding walls and obstacles isn't particularly complicated, Abyss's simple challenge meshes well with its pleasantly ambient music and peaceful atmosphere. I do wish there were more than 2 levels, though. —CODY M.

Recommended

DS WARE



COMMANDO: STEEL DISASTER

PUBLISHED BY COLUMBIA TRISTE SHOOTER 75 100 POINTS/\$2.00

Initially released as a retail DS game a few years ago, Commando: Steel Disaster served up run-'n'-gun shooting action poured directly from the Metal Slug mold. Cool weapons, slick animation, intense combat, massive bosses—Steel Disaster had all the makings of a sleeper arcade-style hit. It did not, however, get a lot of hype, and many gamers missed out. Fortunately, DSWare provides a perfect opportunity to correct that mistake; not only does this edition contain most (though not all) of the original's content but it provides a much more sane difficulty level. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

DS WARE



ESCAPE THE VIRUS: SHOOT 'EM UP

PUB. DS WARE TITON
GEN. SHOOTER
PRIC. 200 POINTS/\$1.00

Teyon's game plan is clear enough: We can expect minor variations on its mediocre shooter series until the weakest among us stop buying this drivel. This time around we get two modes: Shooter (a third-rate variation on Asteroids) and the slightly more interesting Territory, in which players defend a black hole against enemy invaders. If you're wondering what black holes have to do with viruses, you're thinking harder than Teyon. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DS WARE



THE LOST TOWN: THE JUNGLE

PUB. DS WARE CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
STREET
PRIC. 500 POINTS/\$4.00

As with its predecessor The Lost Town: The Dust, this entry in the series tasks players with defending a camp on a day/night schedule (preparing during the day, defending at night). The RPG formula still works, but this sequel adds almost nothing to the previous game. —PATRICK C.

DS WARE



METAL SLUG X

PUB. DS WARE MEDCO 75 1000 SHOOTER 75 1000 POINTS

Taken on its own, Metal Slug X is a pretty great arcade shoot-'em-up. Sure, there's some pretty severe slowdown at times, but the game is loads of fun, packed to bursting with chaotic action and detailed hand-drawn visuals, and it gets even better when you play with a friend. The only issue is that Metal Slug X is a remixed version of Metal Slug 2 (which has been available on Virtual Console for years). Metal Slug X is arguably the superior version, but if you already have Metal Slug 2, X is rather unnecessary. If you're new to Metal Slug, though, it's a moot point; this game is a blast, and it certainly merits checking out. —CHRIS H.

Recommended



REAL BOUT FATAL FURY SPECIAL

PUB. DS WARE MEDCO 75 1000
PRIC. 500 POINTS/\$4.00

I've played loads of SNK fighters over the years, but I had never played Fatal Fury Special until now. I'm kicking myself for overlooking it as this one-on-one fighting title is good fun. With its diverse roster of 19 characters (not counting hidden ones), well-rendered graphics, and a tough-but-not-totally-impossible difficulty level, Real Bout Fatal Fury Special is definitely worth giving a whirl. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

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PREVIEWS

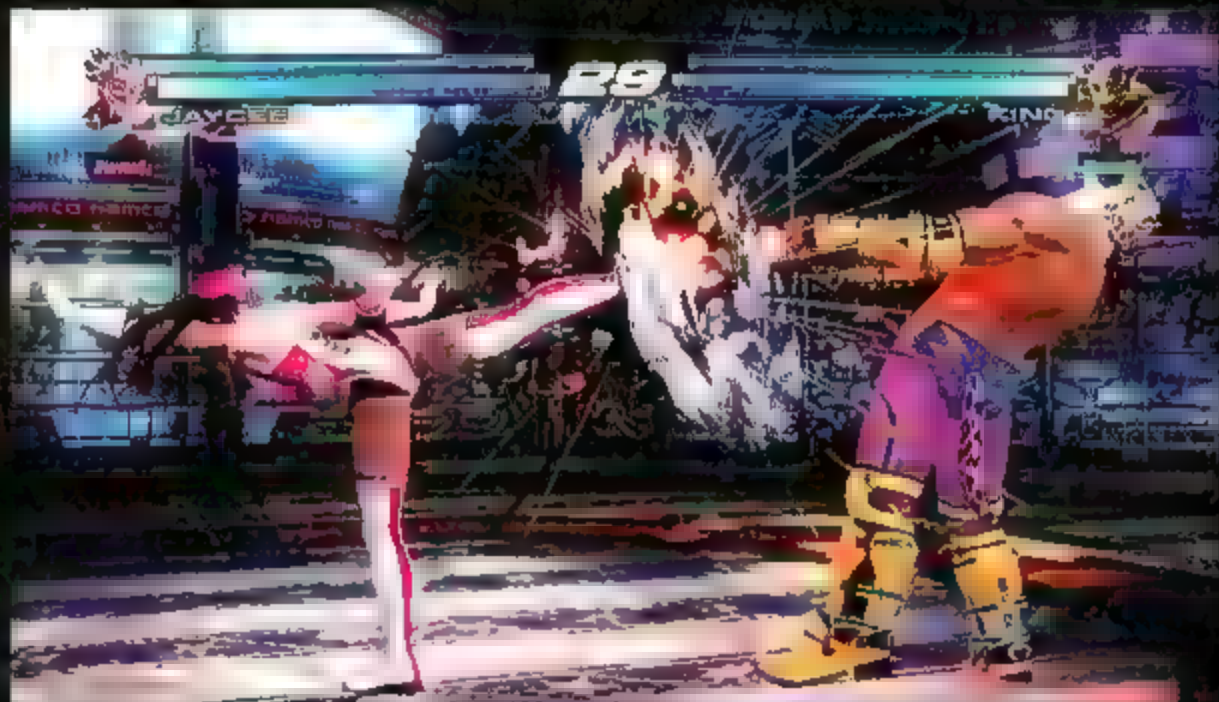
IN THIS SECTION

WRESTLING

Wrestling is a game that has been around for a long time, and it's one of the most popular sports in the world. It's a game of strategy, strength, and technique. In this section, we'll be looking at some of the best wrestling games out there, including WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2, WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 3, and WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 4.

THE ULTIMATE FIGHTER

The Ultimate Fighter is a game that has been around for a long time, and it's one of the most popular fighting games in the world. It's a game of strategy, strength, and technique. In this section, we'll be looking at some of the best Ultimate Fighter games out there, including The Ultimate Fighter: The Game, The Ultimate Fighter: The Game 2, and The Ultimate Fighter: The Game 3.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

Four fists are better than two.

Though two tournaments a year for the Wii U console just might be the ultimate game in Namco Bandai's long-running 3D fighting franchise. As is typical for the series, this latest installment (and the first to arrive on a Nintendo home console) features a deep combat system, complemented by hard-hitting two-on-two battles and a character lineup that includes nearly every Tekken fighter ever created—more than 50 playable warriors in all. Whether you prefer the martial-arts prowess of series mainstay Heihachi Mishima, the grappling skills of the

masked King, the speed of Ling Xiaoyu, or the vicious wildness of Alex the velociraptor, there's a duo for every player in TTT2's vast roster.

"I would say that Tekken Tag Tournament 2 is the best version of Tekken yet," proclaims series producer Katsuhiro Harada. "[It] has succeeded in creating a highly evolved tag game by simultane-



ously portraying four characters on one screen for the first time in Tekken history—probably for the first time in the 3D fighting-game market as well. In addition to that...the character lineup, the types of stage designs, and the entire volume of content are also the greatest in the series's history."

Newcomers should have no problem jumping in and unleashing impressive-looking strikes and combos—by default, punches are mapped to the X and Y buttons on the Wii U GamePad controller, whereas kicks are performed with A and B, and special moves can be assigned to the touch screen—while fighting-game veterans will enjoy taking advantage of techniques such as bound moves (attacks that bounce your opponents off the ground), tag assaults (which allow you to briefly bring in your partner mid-combo to deliver longer, more-punishing beatdowns), and devastating tag throws. You'll also want to master gameplay systems such as Tag Crash (which lets you tag your way out of dangerous situations) and Rage mode (which boosts your strength after you've taken significant damage).

In addition to duking it out against the CPU—which rewards you with one of Tekken's trademark spectacular CG endings upon defeating the final boss—you can fight against other players, either locally or online; there's



Is that Link fighting Ganondorf? Not exactly, but the Tekken fighters are wearing their threads.

even a four-player Pair Play mode in which two-person teams battle for supremacy. (And don't worry; although not every player can use a GamePad controller, others can join in using Classic Controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers.)

But TTY2 isn't only about knocking the stuffing out of your opponents. In the game's story-driven Fight Lab mode, you get to customize your own ultimate fighting robot,

while honing (or learning) your Tekken skills via extensive training missions. Even more exciting is the exclusive Mushroom Battle mode. In this contest, power-up mushrooms straight from the Mario series move across the playfield for you to collect or avoid. Super Mushrooms and Mega Mushrooms make you grow; Poison Mushrooms make you shrink; gold mushrooms provide a speed boost; and invincibility stars, of course, make you invulnerable. There's a good deal of strategy involved; the bigger you get, the harder you hit, but the smaller you are, the easier it is to avoid your opponent.

"I thought that the serious part and the funny part of Tekken would really match the world of this Mushroom Battle," Harada states. "Not only is it crazy and funny, but people wouldn't be able to keep themselves from fighting seriously once they try it out. It's a really good mode. It's something that you could only do by collaborating with Nintendo, right?"

And that's only part of the Nintendo-themed goodness. The game features several bonus costumes that will let you dress Tekken warriors as your favorite Nintendo stars: for example, Heihachi as Mario, Jin as Luigi, Garryu as Bowser, Kazuya as Link, Lili as Zelda, Leo as Sheik, and Zafina as Zero Suit Samus! Without question, the Wii U version of Tekken Tag Tournament 2 will be a fighting game unlike anything else out there. —CHRIS H.

PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI

RELEASE: MARCH 2012





DISNEY EPIC MICKEY: POWER OF ILLUSION

An epic platformer with a nostalgic twist

MORE THAN 30 years ago, Mickey Mouse ventured into the Castle of Illusion on the Sega Genesis system. After overcoming the numerous hazards and foes within the castle's magical worlds, Mickey managed to battle and defeat the wicked witch Mizrabel and save his beloved Minnie Mouse from her clutches.

It was a spectacular journey for Disney's main mouse, but once the adventure was over, it was all but forgotten—until now.

In *Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion*, Mizrabel and her castle have been redeigned in Wasteland, the realm of abandoned Disney ideas. However, Mizrabel's not ready to

let go of Mickey just yet, so she concocts a nasty plan that involves pulling prominent Disney characters into Wasteland. Naturally, Mickey isn't going to just stand by and let Mizrabel's scheme go unchecked, so he orders

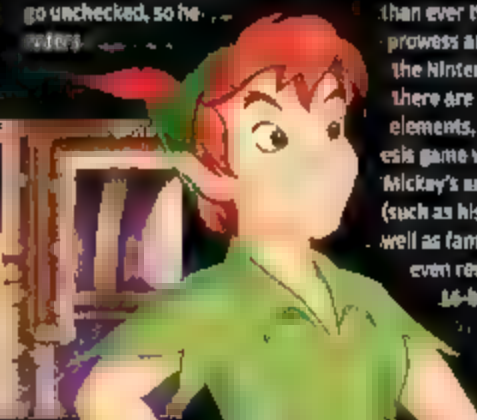
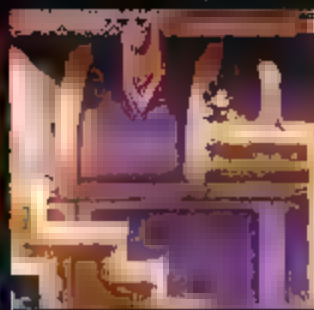
the Castle of Illusion once again to put an end to her plot.

The castle has changed a lot in two decades. The level designs and enemies are almost completely new, and the place looks better than ever thanks to the graphical prowess and stereoscopic 3D of the Nintendo 3DS handheld. But there are lots of retro-inspired elements, too—fans of the Genesis game will instantly recognize Mickey's animations and moves (such as his butt-bounce attack), as well as familiar sound effects and even remixed music from the 16-bit classic.

Mickey, however, has learned many new tricks since his last visit to the castle—in



(Above) The Cave of Wonders is full of treasure—and hazardous pits of spikes.



particular, his trademark Epic Mickey ability to use paint and thinner to create and destroy objects. In addition to simply blasting enemies with point projectiles, you can use the substances at designated spots via the touch screen to erase obstacles, draw platforms, and more. Sometimes your objective is very straightforward—such as drawing a magic carpet to get across a chasm—while at other times the situations are more complex. At one point, for instance, you'll need to launch Mickey from a series of cannons, but you'll have to create some cannons and destroy others (so they don't launch you in the wrong direction) to make your way through the realm. In another area, you'll encounter a deadly blade swinging from a chain; if you erase the chain, the blade will fall harmlessly to the ground, but you'll have



to redraw the chain so you can use it to swing over a pit. Despite being set inside a castle, the environments you encounter are wildly varied, and they often take the guise of familiar Disney locales. It is the Castle of Illusion, after all.) The first world you visit, the castle's east wing,

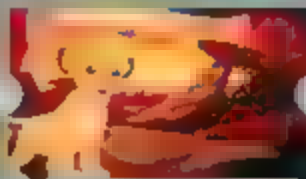
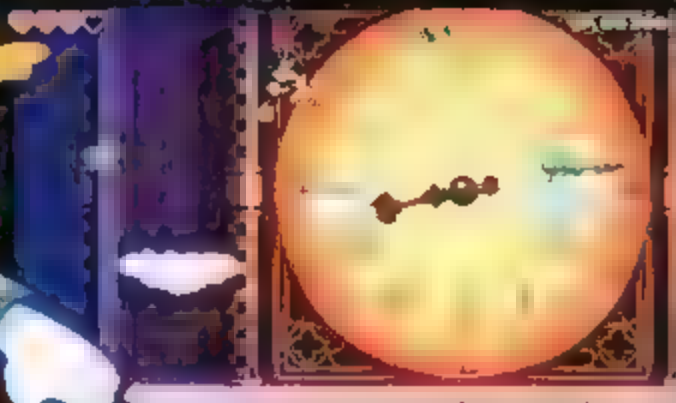


takes its inspiration from Disney's Peter Pan; you'll race across London rooftops, navigate the Neverland Jungle, and battle no'-do-wells on Captain Hook's ship, the Jelly Roger. In the west wing, you'll encounter stages based on Aladdin, in which you'll fight burlly guards in

various challenges in the Cave of Wonders and squaring off against Jafar (who, as in the movie, transforms himself into a giant snake).

As you explore the stages, you'll come across a plethora of Disney characters who Mizrabel has trapped in the Castle of Illusion. From Goofy, Donald, Pluto, and Uncle Scrooge to Ariel, Simba, Beast, and Cinderella, the cast is a certifiable who's-who of the Disney universe. As you find and rescue the characters, they'll set up temporary homes in the castle, essentially creating a bustling community populated by your favorite Disney heroes and villains. Using collectibles you acquire, you'll be able to upgrade the characters' rooms, which in turn unlocks access to new items and quests, thus providing ample reason to return to levels you've already completed. Sometimes you'll even earn new sketch powers—limited-use abilities that provide a variety of effects, such as creating platforms at will or summoning an ally to help you thwart foes. A Scrooge McDuck sketch (which causes Scrooge to pogo-jump on enemies like he did in the classic NES *DuckTales* game) is particularly cool.

Judging by what we've played so far, the game seems set to offer an exemplary combination of old and new, mixing classic-style gameplay with tons of fresh ideas, topped off with ample Disney magic. Mizrabel's plans just might pay off after all—people may very well remember Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion for a long, long time. —CHAD H.



PLATFORM: NINTENDO WII
 INTERACTIVE
 DEVELOPER: BREAMHART
 RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY— ARMORED EDITION

The Dark Knight soars into the Wii U launch lineup.

ONE OF 2012'S most celebrated titles, Batman: Arkham City, proved that developer Rocksteady's heralded original—Batman: Arkham Asylum—was no flash in the pan. Arkham City

matched the latest, dynamic combat and fantastic attention to detail that characterized its predecessor, while adding to the formula an enormous open world, a host of new weapons and gadgets, and

even more depth. It's fitting, then, that the Caped Crusader should make a launch-day appearance on the Wii U console, boasting all of the action from the initial release, and some new flicks to boot.

In Arkham City, a large, run-down section of Gotham City has been converted into a massive prison; the streets are crawling with criminals and supervillains, and, naturally, Batman finds him-

self right to the thick of it. When it comes to making the player actually feel like Batman—which has been at the forefront of the Arkham games' success—the Wii U integration is impressively elegant. Essentially, the screen on the Wii U GamePad becomes your Bat Computer, letting you access all of the game's functionality with touch-operated sophistication, rather than making you hunt through submenus with your Control Stick. Switching between weapons, for instance, is as easy as selecting the desired armament and dragging it to the appropriate area for quick selection (you can have up to three weapons slotted in at a time, selectable via the Control Pad). Your overhead map updates in real time as you move through the game world, and an additional "sonar" mode (think the motion tracker from *Aliens*) shows you the location and movement of enemies and hidden items in range.

That's not all. Many of the game's gadgets are controlled via the touch screen, and have been rebuilt to take advantage of Wii U. Most notable is the ability to control the direction and velocity of your Batarang and other projectile weapons with the controller's built-in gyroscope and accelerometer: you guide the projectile through the air, viewing the experience from its perspective via the touch screen (alternatively, you can handle this the old-fashioned way via the Control Stick). Triggering your explosive gel makes use of the new hardware as well: the process is as simple as selecting the gel on the touch screen when an enemy is in range, and watching the fireworks that ensue.

Equally slick is the integration of the game's persistent world, and all of the action that comes with it. Anything that's communicated to you via your character's earpiece—mission objectives, side quests, updates on ambient crimes from Arkham PD's scanner—is routed through the speaker in your GamePad, which helps to nicely bind the fantasy of the experience. You can monitor the screen for these crimes, as well, selecting the ones you want to pursue and the radar feeds you want to pay attention to. Various other bits and bobs are commu-

nicated and interacted with via the touch screen, ranging from a flashing button when you've got an upgrade available to key intel on your various supervillain targets. An unexpectedly cool moment comes at the very start of the game, when you "log in" as Batman via your fingerprint.

Also worth mentioning (and highlighted in the game title) is the Battle Armor Tech suit that has been created exclusively for the Wii U version of the game. (Both Batman and Catwoman have custom-made, steel-reinforced gaskets that appear throughout the adventure, during both gameplay and cut-scenes. Additionally, a special BAT mode allows for some bonus backside-hitting: build up your meter by landing combos and skilled attacks, then unleash Bat Mode by firing a damage ball to



your standard combat and critting gaskets. A glowing visual filter engulfs during these moments, as well, drawing your enemies out of the shadows so you can actually see what you're pummeling.

Finally, Warner Bros. has seen fit to include all the bonus content from Arkham City's initial release.

These include the Nightwing pack, which adds Batman's ally Nightwing as a playable character for the game's challenge maps; the Robin pack, which does the same for Batman's trusty sidekick (with both Animated Series and New 52 Robin skins); and new Black Mask and Freight Train challenge maps. If you still haven't gotten the chance to play Arkham City, the Wii U may be the best way yet to experience it. —EVAN N.

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEAD GAMING
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012



Batman may be the star of Arkham City, but Catwoman gets her share of the playable spotlight as well. She even has her own armored suit.





(Below) Simon Belmont's collection of severed zombie heads doubtlessly makes him the life of any party.



CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW—MIRROR OF FATE

The fated hour falls late.

UNDER THE NEW name, Konami's Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate has been delayed until early next year. Now for the good news: the more we see of the vampire-hunting action-adventure game, the more impressive it looks.

Continuing the reimagined saga of the Belmont clan and its battle against Dracula, Mirror of Fate places you in control of multiple characters as you attempt to defy destiny by turning down and defeating

the dark lord across generations. To do so, you'll have



to explore Dracula's massive castle, which is brimming with environmental variety. In addition to standard castle loops and catacombs, you'll visit creepy old laboratories, abandoned mines, torture chambers, and the decaying

grounds surrounding the castle. There's even a twisted area known as the Toy Maker's Domain that's inhabited by living (or possibly undead) puppets. Luckily, the game's deep combat system promises a wealth of ways to grind your enemies into dust, be it with the traditional Castlevania whip or one of the character-specific subweapons.

Though we won't be able to bring the fight to Dracula as soon as we'd hoped, the evidence so far indicates that Castlevania's first foray on the Nintendo 3DS system will be worth the wait. —CHRIS H.



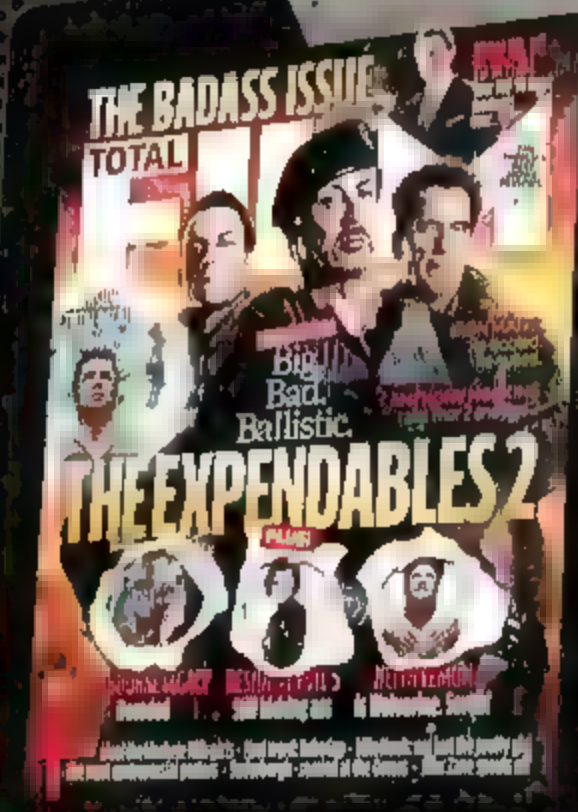
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: BLOODWORK
RELEASE: Q1 2013

NEW!

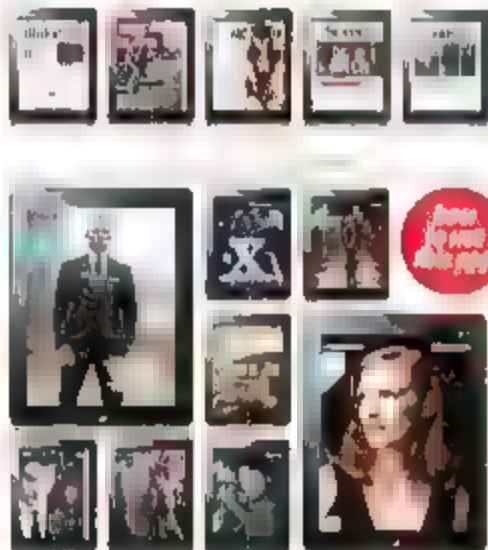
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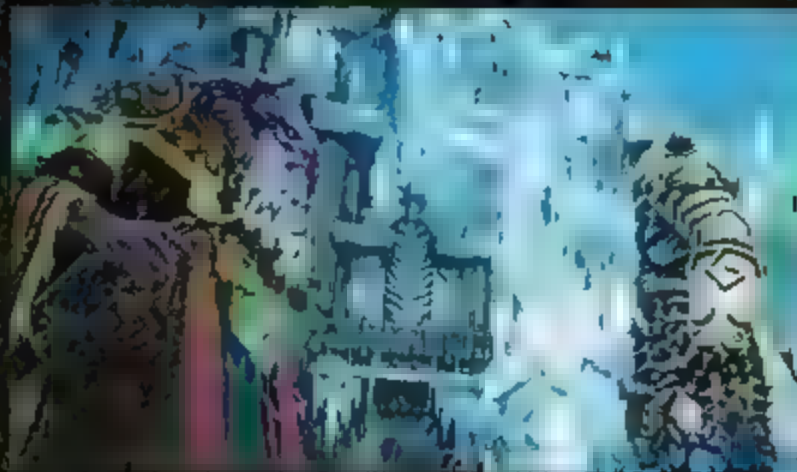


Free sampler
available
2012



DARKSIDERS II

The grim reaper breaks the ice.

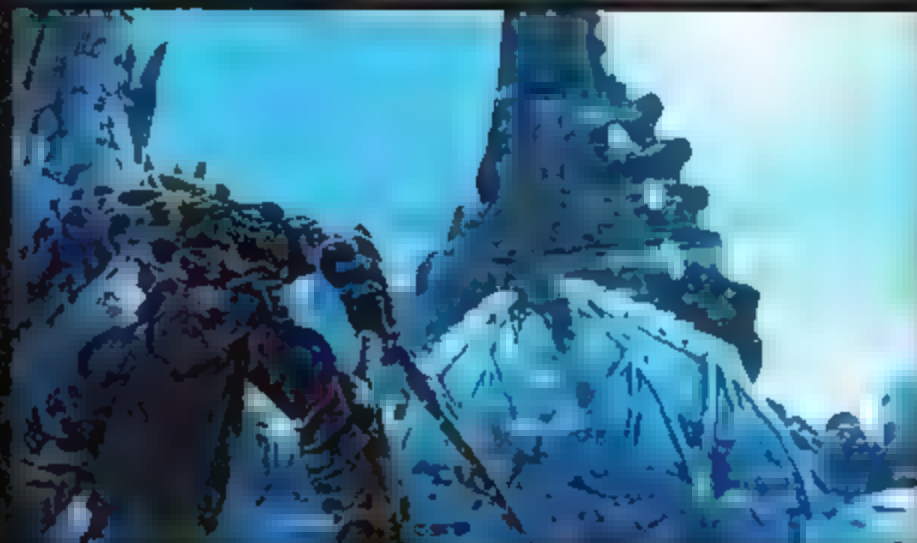


If you're not happy with the way Death is outfitted, you can acquire new weapons and pieces of armor from defeated foes or from merchants like Ostegoth (left).

DARKSIDERS II might be available for other platforms already, but our hands-on experience tells us that the version for the Wii U system will be worth the wait. Not only will the Mature-rated game take advantage of the Wii U GamePad controller's unique features (more on that in a bit), but this iteration of *Darksiders II* also has on its disc what was downloadable content for the other editions. This means the retailer-exclusive, preorder-incentive stuff from the other versions (the additional side quests from GameStop, for example) is available to everyone who purchases *Darksiders II* for Wii U. Furthermore, the Argul's Tomb downloadable-content pack is included on the disc—and we got to experience this new adventure firsthand.

But first a little background. War, one of the Horsemen of the apocalypse, has been accused of kick-starting Armageddon early, so Death embarks on a quest to clear his brother's name. While undertaking this task, the grim reaper journeys to locales such as the Kingdom of the Dead, wherein he encounters folks such as the Deposed King, Argul, who was the former ruler of the kingdom before he was—as his title suggests—overthrown by the Dead King.

The Argul's Tomb quest has you exploring the Deposed King's world, a frozen land teeming with icy enemies. However, unlike the majority of the game, in which you dispatch these foes via hacking and slashing, the beginning of Argul's Tomb is played as a third-person shooter. You pick up a grenade launcher-style firearm, proceed down a canyonesque path, and blast away at all foes that get in your way. Because you tap ZR to fire explosive shells and



then press ZL to ignite them, you're able to employ a little strategy in your shooting; you can use the explosives as remotely detonated landmines, for instance.

Once you've reached the end of this shooting section, you are granted access to the first of two dungeons. Unfortunately, you can't use your firearm here; instead you must get up close and personal with your enemies. You tap Y for your primary weapons (a pair of handheld scythes), and X for your secondary ones (such as axes, claws, maces, and tonfas). Additionally, you can employ abilities that buff Death's strength, for example, or summon a group of ghouls to fight alongside you; all you have to do is press the appropriate icons on the touch screen. Even with these powers at your disposal, though, things can get hairy, so

you'll want to evade when necessary. You can do so by tapping R or by flicking the GamePad. (We were told that motion controls also come into play during swimming and horse-riding sections of the game.)

The two dungeons we played through required the use of the Voldwalker ability, with which you can create portals to get to previously unreachable areas. Portals can be placed only on magic circles, so you can likely get a general idea of where you need to go next. These circles can be well-hidden, however, and you have to use some trial and error, as there's no indication as to whether you should use a regular portal or a charged portal; the latter expels objects—Death included—at a high velocity. (You hold and release ZR to place a charged portal, as opposed to just tapping ZR for a regular one.)

Our demo culminated in a boss battle with an enormous ice dragon called Frostbane. We weren't able to experience this confrontation in its entirety, but we look forward to doing so when *Darksiders II* is released at the Wii U launch. —JUSTIN CO.



PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES
RELEASE: HOLIDAY 2012



(Above) A typical picnic in the park is anything but when Maxwell and his magical object-creating notebook are involved.

SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED

Twisting words

YOU'D THINK THAT most people would be satisfied with the ability to summon almost any English noun and modify it with hundreds of different adjectives. But apparently being able to will a fire-breathing jackalope into existence just wasn't awesome enough; someone needed a fire-breathing jackalope that suffers from explosive lactose intolerance and farts out mummified piranhas whenever it rains. To that guy we present *Scribblenauts Unlimited*.

Now in addition to the series's ever-expanding dictionary of conjurable words, players can use an object editor to modify their creations in essentially limitless ways. Casual players can focus on cosmetic features, using simple controls to recolor parts of an object or

fuse multiple objects together, and use pull-down menus to change physical properties and behaviors. But truly determined players can dig even deeper, using an intuitive system of menus to write hundreds of lines of code that dictate every aspect of their custom object's behavior. "A lot of people talk

about the educational nature of *Scribblenauts* in writing and learning words," notes creative director Jeremiah Slacik.

"[The object editor's] scripting language is very high-level and actually teaches programming in a way."

The object editor is exclusive to the Wii U version of the

game, but the 3DS iteration of *Scribblenauts Unlimited* does include most of the title's other new features, including more than 30 open-world levels where players can engage in quests or simply strew around. The open-world structure can lead to some interesting situations: In a medieval-themed level a knight will ask you to wipe out the orcs laying siege to the castle, while the orcs will ask for help sneaking past the knight. Siding with the orcs—say, by conjuring costumes for the invaders—could lead to other quest-givers within the castle being slain, or may present opportunities for further quests. Players are free to complete the quest one way, see what happens, and then reset the level and make the opposite choice, keeping the rewards they earned the first time around.

We won't have to wait long to dig into this quirky sandbox: both versions of *Scribblenauts Unlimited* are scheduled to ship day-and-date with the Wii U hardware launch. —CAREY L.



(Above) Things don't look too good for Maxwell's brother. Good thing you can create whatever you need to rescue him.



PUBLISHER: WILDMAN
DEVELOPER: 5TH CELL
RELEASE: HOLIDAY 2012

FREAKYFORMS DELUXE: YOUR CREATIONS, ALIVE!

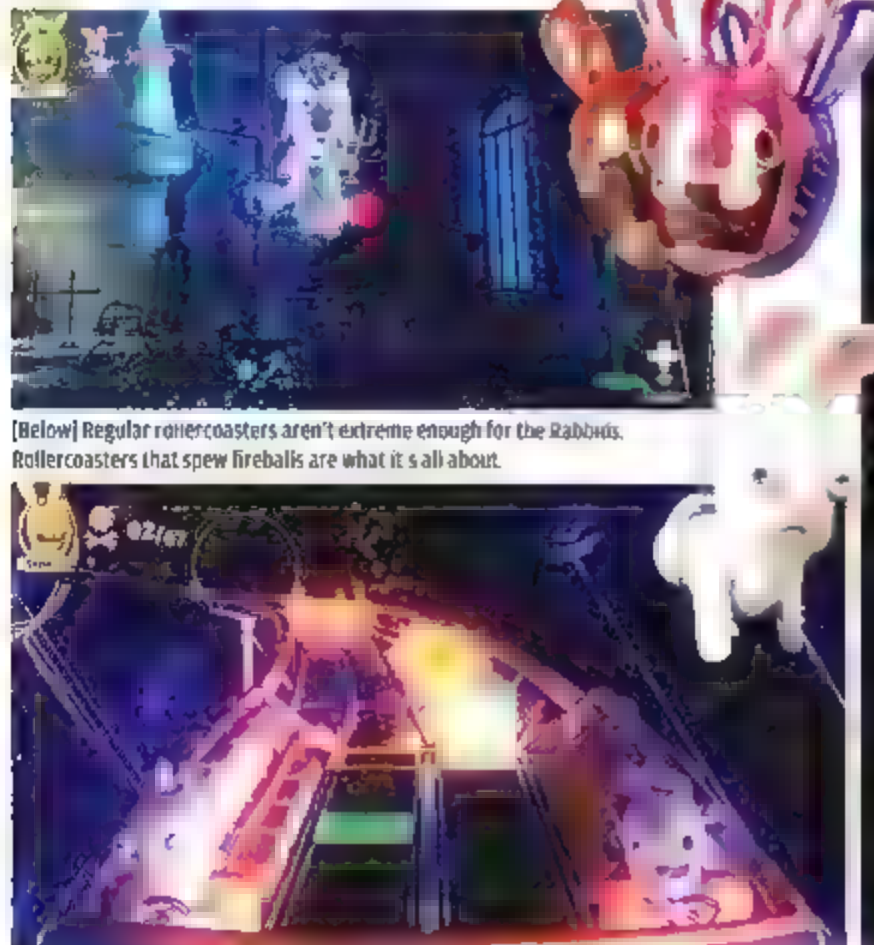
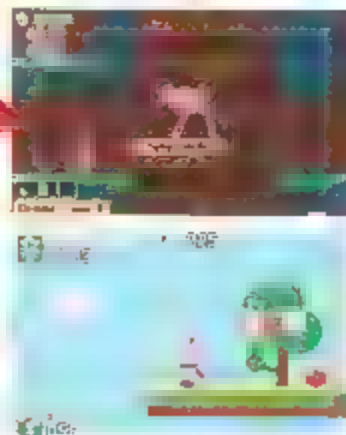
Le freak, c'est chic.

This enhanced version of last year's well-received eShop title maintains all of the aspects that made the original so enjoyable. It focuses on an easy-to-use yet versatile tool to design your own creatures. You then lead your critters (called Formees) across an ever-expanding planet, where they complete quests and discover new items to add to your Formees. In this Deluxe version of the game, there are more parts to choose from than before, so your custom heroes can look even more bizarre. There are also dungeons to explore, where you'll encounter enemies and engage in simple RPG-style battles. Your Formees' stats can be altered with new special powers, as well. Since half of the fun of Freakyforms is sharing your designs with a friend, the multiplayer mode is a welcome bonus. Thanks to Download Play, two people can play together while concocting their own Formees. Sounds like a great way to freak out. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: ASOMNI
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012



[Above] Get your freak on with other creatures in simple RPG-esque combat.



[Below] Regular rollercoasters aren't extreme enough for the Rabbids. Rollercoasters that spew fireballs are what it's all about.

RABBIDS LAND

Amusement park?
More like insanity park.

That's right—Ubisoft's lunatic Rabbids are back, and they're bringing their unique brand of craziness to the Wii U console. This time the psychotic critters have overrun an amusement park, which adds on to all manner of chaotic fun. By popular theme-park attractions, such as a rollercoaster, a pirate-boat ride, and a haunted house. The main mode in Rabbids Land is the trophy race, a board-game-style contest for up to four players in which you'll compete in minigames, answer trivia questions, and find special items in an attempt to score the most trophies. Naturally, there's plenty of variety—in one minigame you'll tilt the Wii U GamePad to attempt to crush your adversaries with giant balls, and in another you'll rhythmically shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers to throw fireballs while your opponent attempts to dodge them. All this and throwable cows, too! —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PAIN
RELEASE: HOLIDAY 2012



Above: Chris Jericho proves he's the best in the world by delivering his Codebreaker finishing move to Dolph Ziggler in midair

WWE '13

Get ready for an attitude adjustment.

EARLIER THIS YEAR at WrestleMania XXVIII, millions (and millions) of fans around the world got to witness The Rock, one of the most popular wrestlers of WWE's Attitude Era, go head-to-head with John Cena, one of the biggest WWE stars of today. Soon, gamers will be able to witness a similar collision of past and present when WWE '13 arrives.

on the Wii console.

As you'd expect, WWE '13 has all of the typical enhancements that come with an annual franchise update—there are new characters bringing the playable roster to more than 60, new moves (finishers performed while your

opponent is lying through the air, for example), and new music.

Types (including special referee matches that enable you to be as fair or as biased as you want). There are also new interactive gameplay elements—so-called “spectacular moments” such as smashing an opponent through the ring barricade, executing a finishing move on top of the announcers’ table, or causing the ring to collapse when one superheavyweight suplexes another off the top turnbuckle.

But what separates WWE '13 from a typical sequel is its focus on the extremely popular late-1990s Attitude Era of professional wrestling—a time

when WWE was constantly evolving, innovating, and creating new stars in an attempt

to stay one step ahead of the competition. To that end, WWE '13 features more than 30 Attitude Era characters (including Mike Tyson!), as well as a full-fledged Attitude Era Campaign mode. Replacing the Road to WrestleMania mode from previous titles, the Attitude Era Campaign is this game's main story-driven single-player mode. It will focus on eight top performers (Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Triple H, The Undertaker, Kane, Mankind, The Rock, and Steve Austin) and allow players to relive approximately two years' worth of WWE highlights, culminating at WrestleMania XV.

By activating special WWE Attitude Moment button-press sequences, you'll even be able to





EVERYONE



CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Comic Mischief

make matches unfold much as they originally did on TV.

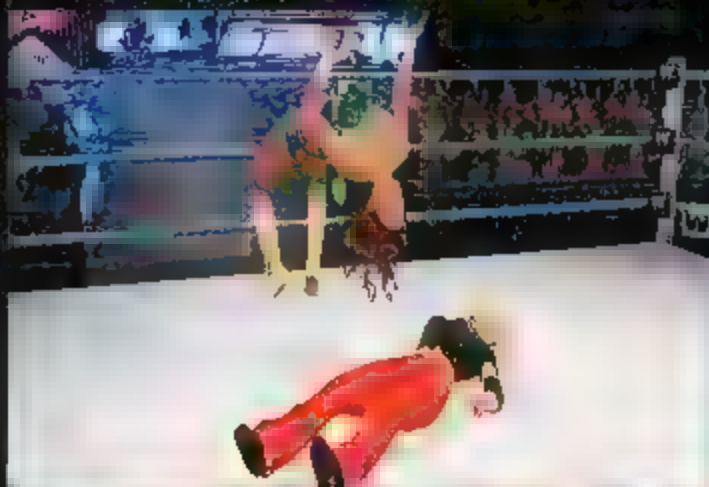
But what if you're more interested in current WWE performers such as CM Punk, Brock Lesnar, Sheamus, Rey Mysterio, Cody Rhodes, or Zack Ryder? In that case you'll want to put them through their paces in the new-and-improved Universe mode. Though previous years' iterations of this manager/career mode were full of promise, they often fell short in many gamers' eyes, which is why this year's edition has a special weapon: Paul Heyman. The former ECW promoter (and current WWE manager) knows what it's like to craft wrestling storylines, and he was brought in to bring more authenticity and variety to Universe mode.

"Within WWE '13, it's all a matter of spontaneity and the fact that you give the gamer the chance to play the writer, the producer. They get to be Vince McMahon...they get to make the decisions...they get to determine who goes for the title, who main-events at WrestleMania," explains Heyman. "I kept it true to

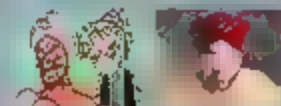
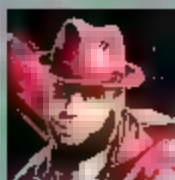
life in how a scenario would play out. Usually in video games...the storylines are rushed. You want to break up a tag team? You put them in the ring and break them up. And in this game you get to tell the 15-, 16-, 17-, 18-week storyline arc that leads to the breakup, and you get to actually make it happen and manipulate the characters in the way that you want so that you get to create the intricate storylines and the twists and the turns, and not just wrestler A turns on wrestler B and now they have a match. Now you get to tell the story as you would want to tell it, and you get to tell it over the course of 4 weeks, 8 weeks, 16 weeks—a whole storyline arc."

Between the ambitious Universe improvements, massive character and feature list, and emphasis on one of wrestling's most popular eras, WWE '13 just might be the game that grappling fans have been waiting for. —SHAUN H.

PUBLISHED: YND
DEVELOPER: YND
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2012



ALL ABOUT THE RINGS



Edison's limblast hero returns—exclusively on
Wii U—with Rayman Legends, and there may be no
better reason to buy the console.



BY STEVEN J. MASON

WII U

STUFF of LEGENDS

IF YOU ASK US, the best way to play Rayman Legends is with a Wii U GamePad. At the foundation of this new game is everything that made Origins a platforming masterpiece: stunning hand-drawn visuals, expert level design, an infectious soundtrack, and multiplayer hijinks. But according to Ancel, "The big motivation for Rayman Legends was really the Wii U GamePad." Ubisoft Montpellier was one of the first outside studios to receive Wii U development kits, and Ancel's team immediately envisioned how a Rayman title might benefit from the controller. "The environment is very important in a platform game," he explains. "And we realized that the GamePad could be a great way to modify the environment in new and different ways."

Enter Murfy. The greenbottle fly with the ever-present (and slightly creepy) grin first appeared as a guide in Rayman 2: The Great Escape. His role in Legends is far more interesting. While up to four players lead Rayman and company through each level via Wii Remote controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers, a fifth player can manipulate their surroundings by controlling Murfy on the Wii U GamePad. The diminutive ditty can perform a wide variety of helpful tasks, whether it's cutting ropes (via the touch screen) to lower platforms or turning a gear (via the gyroscope) to safely guide his friends through a spike-filled maze. That adds a collaborative element to the festivities, of course, but the person controlling Murfy can also cause plenty of mischief. When one player was about to snag a health bottle during our demo, for instance, I was able to grab the bottle with Murfy and quickly drag it to another player. And even though he can't punch like the other characters, there are plenty of ways Murfy can use the environment to cause an untimely demise for his fellow travelers. One of Ancel's favorite examples: scooping up lava—or super-hot mustard—and dumping it on someone's head.

THE SUPPORT

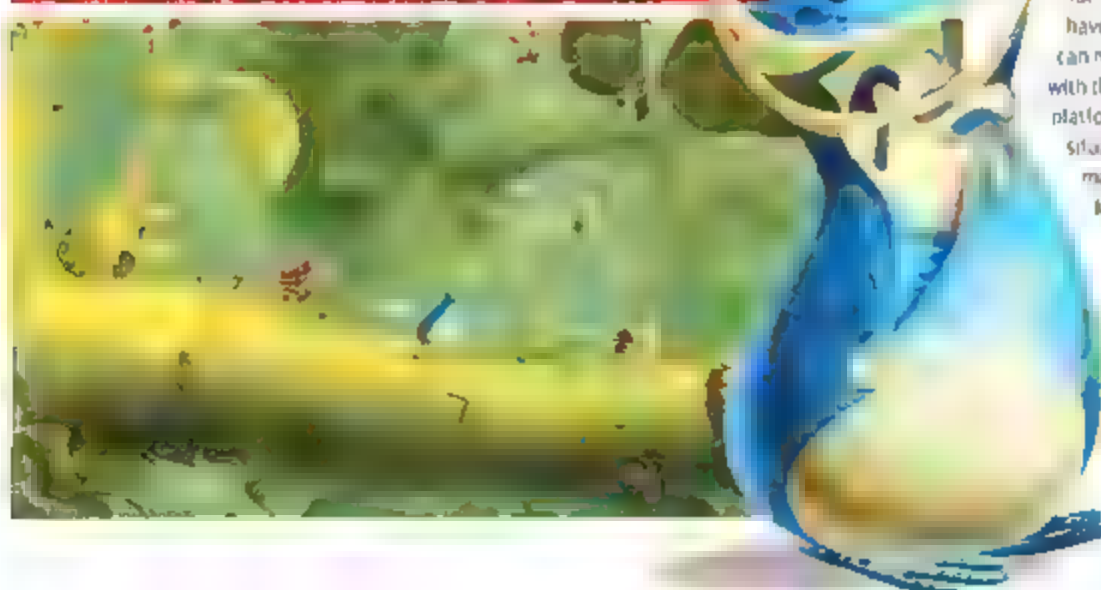
Whatever Murfy's demeanor, his presence makes for a fantastic multiplayer experience that surpasses even Origins. "We have this big vision, which is about playing all together, and this experience is deeper with the Wii U GamePad," Ancel enthuses. "It's a big modifier on top of the classic game. It's something that changes the experience. You get the whole classic platforming gameplay, but on top of that you have someone who acts a bit like a god and can modify things. There's infinite potential with the combination of touch and traditional platforming—new ideas and completely new situations." And there are unlikely to be many arguments over who has to play as Murfy; we had every bit as much fun with him as we did the other characters.

That, frankly, came as a shock, especially given our deep affinity for the franchise's top-notch platforming. "What we think is interesting about the Murfy player is that he's doing something completely different from the

classic game. It's something that changes the experience. You get the whole classic platforming gameplay, but on top of that you have someone who acts a bit like a god and can modify things. There's infinite potential with the combination of touch and traditional platforming—new ideas and completely new situations."

And there are unlikely to be many arguments over who has to play as Murfy; we had every bit as much fun with him as we did the other characters. That, frankly, came as a shock, especially given our deep affinity for the franchise's top-notch platforming.

"What we think is interesting about the Murfy player is that he's doing something completely different from the



other players," says level designer Chris McEntee. "You don't feel like you're stepping on each other's toes because he's not doing the things that Rayman wants to be doing."

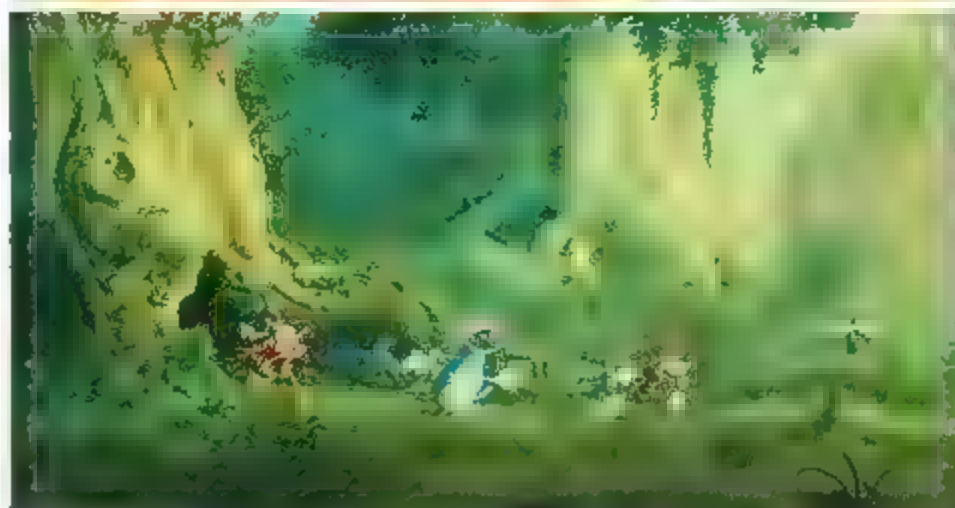
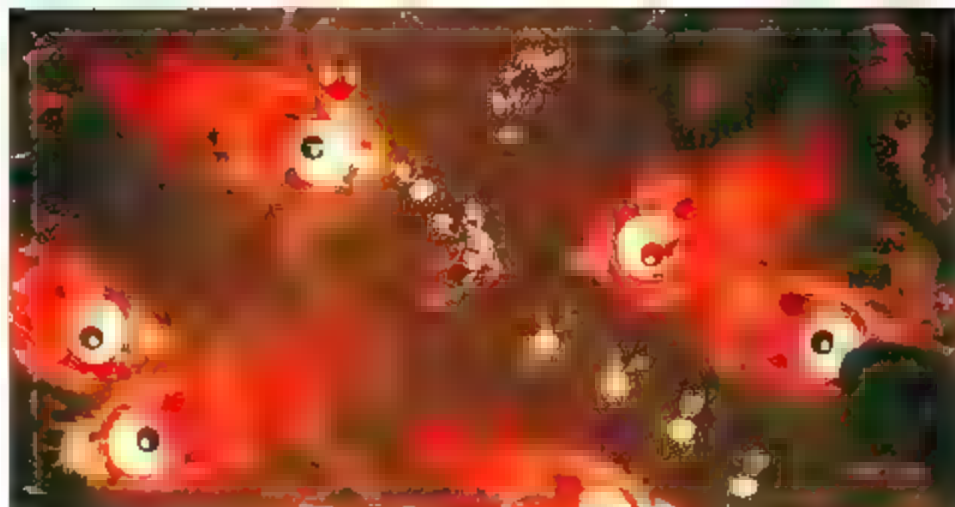
McEntee also stresses the importance of having Murphy as an onscreen avatar. "We want the player on the GamePad to feel like they have an identity in the game's world," he tells us. "That person is playing a character just as much as the guy next to him; he's not just a gimmick layered on top. It makes him feel like he's part of the experience."

Though Rayman Legends is intended for—and best enjoyed with—a bunch of friends sitting on the sofa, it does offer the option to play solo. In that case, you'll spend the vast majority of your time controlling Rayman or one of the other platforming heroes, and when you get to a section that requires Murphy's assistance, you'll temporarily switch to him while the AI takes the reins of your other character. We've yet to try this for ourselves, but the developers promise the AI will perform flawlessly to avoid frustration.

INTO THE OPEN

Ancel and company's changes to the Origins formula go beyond the addition of Murphy. "One thing we did quite early on in development is improve the classic platforming mechanics," recalls McEntee. "So for example, if you jump-kicked while you were running in Origins, you would almost stop in midair and drop straight down. Now when you jump-kick, you keep moving forward. Little tweaks like that help the game feel more fluid, which is sort of amazing because Rayman Origins already felt pretty fluid to begin with."

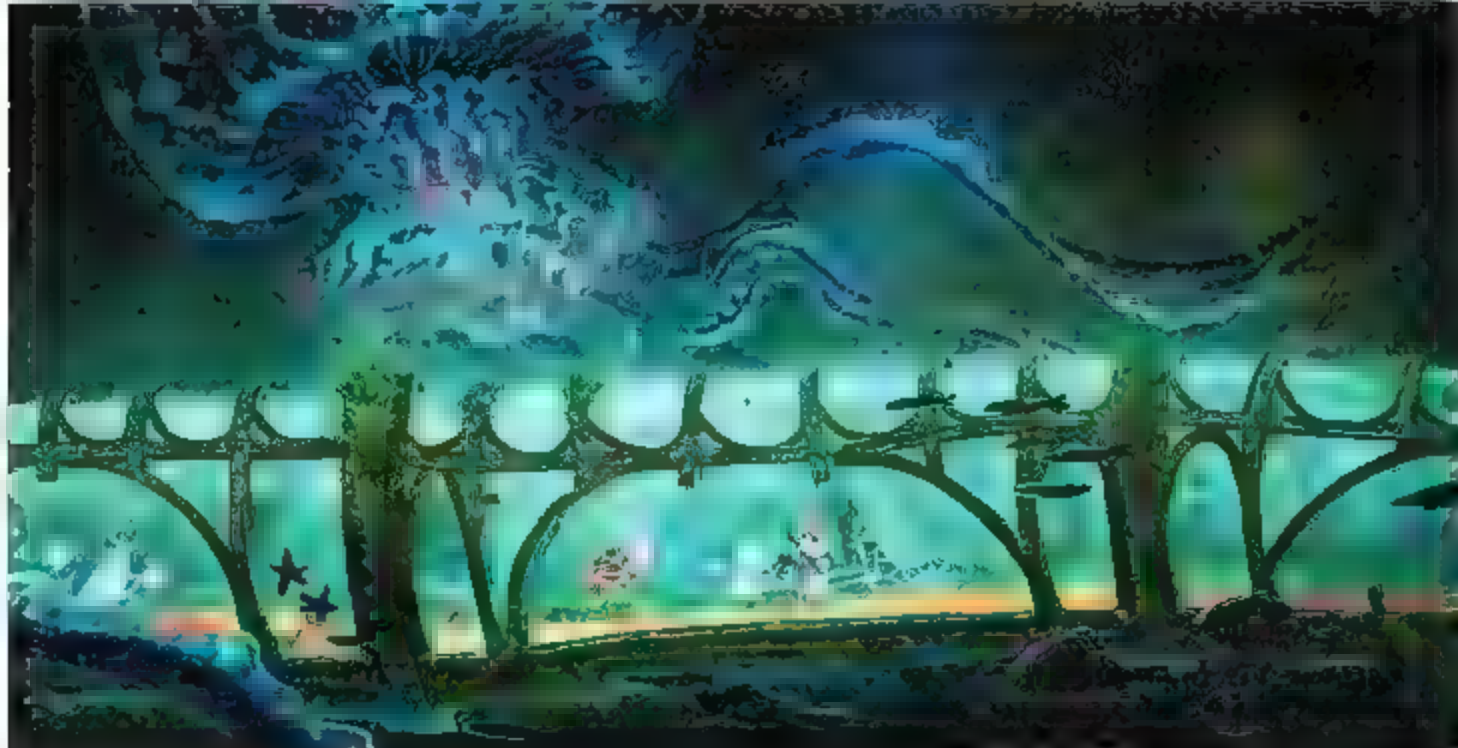
The overall structure has been revamped as well. Unlike Origins, which featured a linear progression, Legends lets you travel to any of its five worlds right from the start. In explaining the reasons behind that change, McEntee points



out, "Sometimes it's very frustrating when you get stuck on a particular level. When players are required to finish that level to continue the game, a lot of them will get frustrated and might put it down and say, 'never mind. We wanted to give

people options. If you can't beat this level, maybe try a different world and come back another time." Ancel interjects, "That's very important, because we want everyone to experience all of these new ideas we've come up with."





[Above] Feast your eyes on the first-ever screen from Rayman Legends's gorgeous underwater world.



indicative of the unique collaboration between his art and design teams. He shows us an amusing piece of concept art with a finger emerging from the clouds—inspired by the hand of God in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*—and zapping a sheep with lightning. "It's very interesting, because this was not done specifically for the shield idea," he recalls. "We came up with the shield idea and needed something coming from the sky. Then we remembered we had this piece of concept art, and everything came together. Other times, we'll start with an artist's vision and build game-design elements on top of that. So it works in both directions."

From there we got to demo one of the game's musical stages—Orchestra! Chaos—in the Magic Beanstalk world. This new stage type requires players to jump, swing, and punch to the beat of the music, earning it the nickname "Platform Hero" within the studio. As we traversed a giant beanstalk in this particular stage, thorn-covered vines closed in all around us, leaving very little

room for error. About halfway through the level, we dropped below the clouds and into the middle of a violent storm. As torrential rain poured down, lightning strikes occasionally shrouded our heroes in shadow. It was an impressive sight to behold.

The final game will include eight to ten of these music stages, with at least one per world. Some will feature original tracks by the game's award-winning composer, Christophe Mèral, whose previous works include *Rayman Origins* and *Beyond Good & Evil*. For others, Héra has remixed licensed tracks, infusing them with a distinct Rayman flavor, to hilarious effect. We got to hear "Eye of the Tiger" done in a flamenco style with gibberish vocals and a little kazoo mixed in, followed by a luau version of "Woo Hoo" from the 5.6.7 8's.

Our visit concluded with an exclusive sneak peek at what the developers have in store for the underwater world, which is still very early in development. As Ancel describes it, "This world is going to feature sort of a Jules Verne-inspired

environment, but the story will be more James Bond. There's a secret underwater base and you have to infiltrate it. So it's really about infiltration, which is a new theme for Rayman." The levels here play heavily with light and shadow, requiring players to remain cloaked or risk being spotted—and fried—by the base's security system. Ancel took us through a number of sample rooms, including one in which players must avoid a sentry's spotlight and another where they have to swim between glowing jellyfish. Some stages will also require Murfy to manipulate light sources or create shadows in various ways, like holding a discarded robot head in front of a rotating floodlight—to create safe areas for the other players. "The rhythm of these levels will be a bit different from *Rayman Origins*," says McEntee. "It's not constantly full steam ahead, run, run, run. It's really more about understanding the environment, knowing where it's safe, and getting in sync with the shadows. It's cool to sometimes break up the rhythm from just constant platforming into something a little bit different."

"And the idea isn't only to have the stealth part of the base," he adds. "There will be sections with lots of traps and electrified water and all of these kinds of things. You'll be platforming over mechanical objects, then you climb into an air vent and suddenly you're in a dark room that you have to navigate." Ancel sums it up thusly: "We didn't want to make another underwater world with just new fishes."

That attitude was evident throughout our time with *Rayman Legends*. Though the game is following *Origins* by just over a year, nothing about it feels phoned-in. On the contrary, everything we played was bristling with creativity, and the GamePad functionality is among the best we've seen thus far. A certain mustachioed plumber has his work cut out for him if he wants to hold onto his platforming crown.

French Connection

Michel Ancel
on the sit



Michel Ancel



Chris McEntee

NIHILING POWER I'm wondering what came first. Did you want to make a new Rayman and decided that Wii U was a good fit, or vice versa?

MCENTEE: To be honest, we were on Wii U very early— even for Origins. [Looks at Chris McEntee] but you didn't know that! [Laughs]

We did not know exactly when Nintendo would release the system, but we started making Origins for Wii U at that point. We thought Wii U would come out a lot earlier. We worked very closely with Nintendo [on Wii U] early on, giving them feedback on the various prototypes.

When we finished Origins, it was time to start thinking about Wii U again, because [the hardware] was nearly complete. So to answer your question, we wanted to make a Rayman game and started to explore how we could make it interesting using Wii U.

So was the Wii U exclusivity born from the fact that you can do all of this interesting new stuff with the GamePad that's not possible on the other consoles?

CHRIE MCENTEE: Well, technically we could do it with SmartGlass [for Xbox 360] and with the Vita being hooked to the PlayStation 3. The possibility could be there, but we chose to really focus on Wii U specifically because it has a special toolset and because everyone that buys it gets what they need to play the game.

Right.

CM: We don't want to have the player dependent

on other technology that they have to purchase to make sure they can play the full experience. Here you buy the Wii U system, you buy the game, and you can experience all of the content without extras. And we didn't want to give somebody half of the experience just for the sake of getting it out on another console. We want the player to get everything that we have to offer them from this game.

■ And I think this is where Nintendo is really out in front of things. The technology inside the controller is quite a bit more

than what you would

people might think

It's really responsive

The response time is

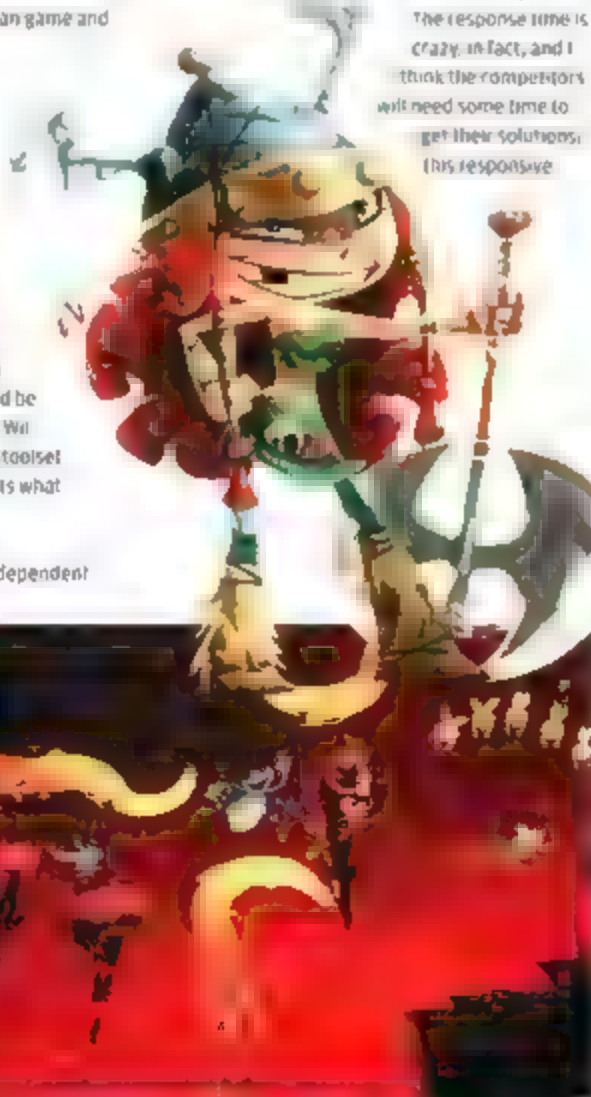
crazy, in fact, and I

think the competitors

will need some time to

get their solutions.

[His responsive



it's crazy because the game is running in full HD [on the television], we are streaming another picture on the GamePad screen, and it's still 60 frames per second. And the latency on the controller is just 1/60 of a second, so it's one frame late. It's crazy. It's so fast. It's almost instant. That's why it responds so well. So it can be used as a real game-design thing.

Can you talk about the inspiration and the beginnings of the Murfy stuff on the GamePad? And did you experiment with any other ideas for the controller?

■ We had two or three big ideas at the beginning, but that's the one that came out on top. The other ideas were— for example, because there are a lot of things happening on the screen, we thought maybe it would be nice to have interactions with zoomed-in parts of the environment. It would be something that's too small to see on the TV screen, but it's zoomed in on the GamePad and you can interact with it—like contextual things such as playing with the environment or characters. Maybe you can have funny interactions, but it was superficial, it was a gimmick, almost.

■ Because of course when you're working with a new controller like this, a lot of the first ideas that come out are the most gimmicky and silly. You look at iPad games and what are they doing and everything else, but what we really had to work hard on was to say, "Yes, there might be 15 little ideas that on their own could be a cool puzzle game or something interesting for a smaller experience. But how can we bring all of this into the realm of a platformer?" So the player can manipulate objects and things, and he can slice this, and he can rotate the environment by turning a crank, but we really had to try and make it fit into the experience and not just be a series of random things that he can suddenly do out of nowhere. And that's where the character comes into play because it justifies all of your actions. You're not just seeing a magical wheel, and then you touch it and suddenly it's rotated. You feel like there's a guy holding it and he's making it move, and it solidifies your experience and your part in the world that you're playing in.

Was there anything from Origins that you felt like you wanted to improve upon?

■ Yeah, I think the basics of the game. You know, Origins is really intense and sometimes maybe too intense. When you play a lot—[exhales deeply]



you feel like that. It's a lot of action, action. The pacing in [Rayman Legends] is really interesting, and the structure of the levels is a bit different. We tried to have levels where you kind of have a pause and focus on exploration. And there are times where you can continue with the flow or you can explore further in some specific areas and enter hidden, alternative rooms, and they don't have the same pacing as the "main path." The pacing is different, so it can be a puzzle; it can be whatever. So I think that's the thing we learned—to not always have everything at the maximum in terms of speed and intensity. And it's nice with the Wii U controller because we have those different ways of playing.

Another thing I really wanted to improve on is the readability of the game. We've not fully realized this; we're still improving things with the artists. But the new rendering engine is not only about lights and things like that, more than anything we tried to make the picture easier to read. So we are working with the artists to emphasize what's part of the playfield and—

■ **■** The rim lights, the dynamic fog—all of that helps to give everything in the background a consistent washed-out effect that makes the playfield stand out a lot more. Maybe there are fewer objects in the foreground obscuring the view. It's really just making things more clear; this is where you're playing, and these are the objects you can interact with.

■ **■** We are still working on it. It's not perfect today, but that's something we have in mind: readability and making sure things are as clear as possible. Sometimes it's a bit impossible, because you have so many players at the same time doing so many different things. Of course, it's part of the game to maybe lose the focus on things, but we tried to control this as much as possible—not having too many interactive elements at the same time and making things clearer.

■ **■** One thing in the level structure that's changed as well—in Rayman Origins we had a page and a door you go through, next page, door you go through, and each level was built of about four or five pages, and then you get to the end room and you finish. And now we try to eliminate those separations as much as possible to have one continuous experience. There are still checkpoints, but it doesn't feel broken and fractured. You feel

like you're just going through this one-level experience, and only when we really want the feeling of going inside of a cave and emerging because it gives a cool sense of exploration or something do we break it. But for the most part, we didn't want to limit ourselves with a system where every level is five of these pages, and that's the structure. It's like, this level can be longer than this one, this one can be shorter but a more memorable experience. And we can put in breaks if we need them. But rather than saying that each level is standard, it's more that the overall experience should be standardized, and we can break it apart where we want to and make it interesting.

When Origins came out, we honestly didn't think 2D platformers could look much better. Legends is proving us wrong. Are the improved visuals primarily the result of enhancements to the engine or does the Wii U hardware play a part?



[Below] Murfy may not be able to attack foes directly, but he wields an even greater power: tickling.



■ **■** What surprises me with Wii U is that we don't have many technical problems. It's really running very well, in fact. We're not obliged to constantly optimize things. Even on the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions [of Origins], we had some fill-rate issues and things like that. So it's partly us—we improved the engine—but I think the console is quite powerful. Surprisingly powerful. And there's a lot of memory. You can really have huge textures, and it's crazy because sometimes the graphic artist—we build our textures in very high-definition. They could be used in a movie. Then we compress them, but sometimes they forget to do the compression and it still works! [Laughs] So yeah, it's quite powerful. It's hard sometimes when you're one of the first developers because it's up to you to come up with solutions to certain problems. But the core elements of the console are surprisingly powerful.

■ **■** And because we're developing [Rayman Legends] exclusively for Wii U, we don't have to worry about cross-platform optimization.

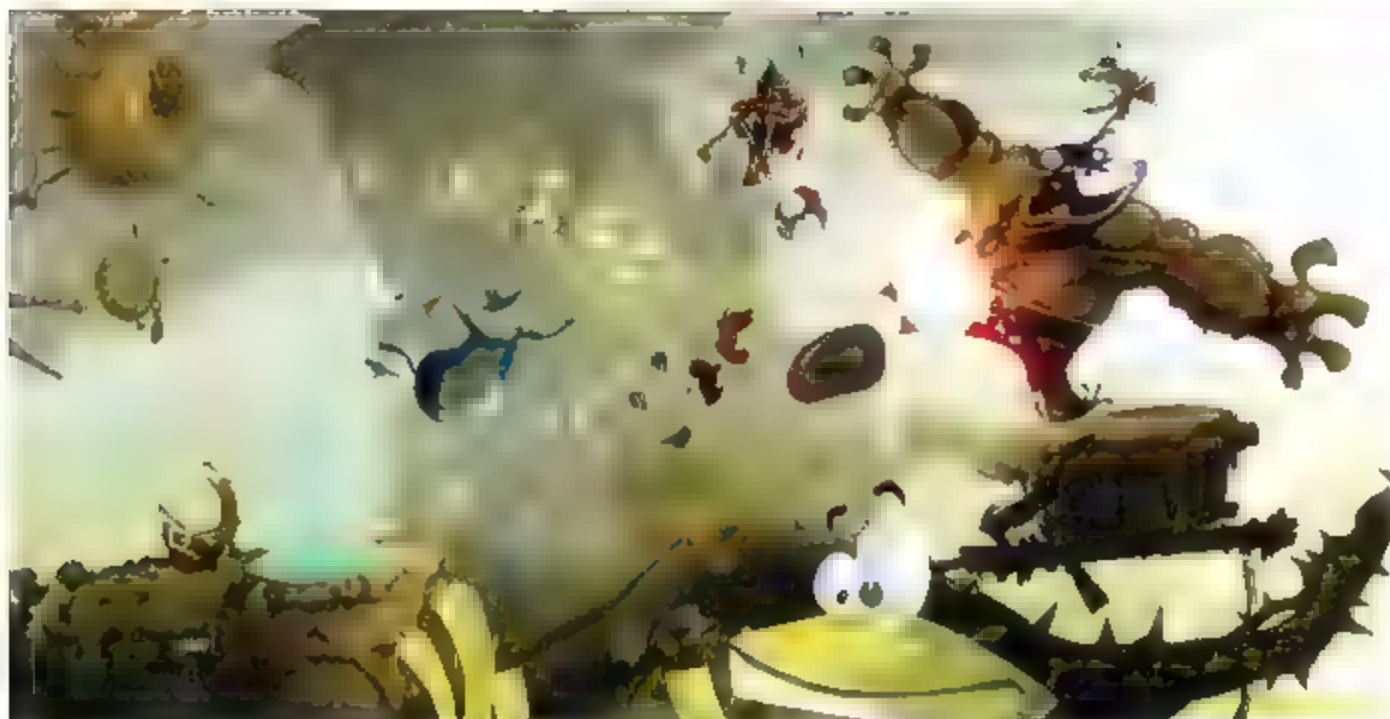
■ **■** We can push what the console can do; push it to its limits. And of course, we have a new lighting engine. In fact, the game engine for Origins was mostly just classic sprites in HD, but now we can light them and add shadows and all these things. So there is some technical innovation with the engine itself.

In Origins, you had the Moskito shooter stages. Do those return or is there anything similar in Legends?

■ **■** For me, that was really there to break up the normal experience a little bit, to offer players something completely different. But with the varied gameplay in Legends, we already have that feeling. To me, it was a bit too much to bring back the shooter stages on top of that.

Can you talk about the new character, Barbara, and how she came about?

■ **■** We wanted each world to have its own character that you can unlock. She's the one in the Medieval world, where you have all these castles and very raw mechanisms like axes. So she's really a reference to barbarians and that kind of environment. Also, we really wanted to make a character



that would create a different shape so that when you play with Rayman, Globbox, a Teersie, and Barbara, they're all completely different. That's the main idea.

There's a rhythm and a fluidity to Rayman Origins and now Legends that I think is unique to the franchise. How do you achieve that?

What sort of approach do you have to take to level design to make sure that flow is achieved from level to level?

■ Think—for me, anyway—a big part of it is that we have this game engine that allows us to play while we build. We don't have to constantly save, open the game, play it, go back, and rebuild. And then it really just comes down to play-testing, and that's what we do all day long when we're making these levels: create a section, test it, then ask, "Do I have the fluidity there? Does it feel great? Is there a rhythm?" Of course, Michel is one of the best of us to immediately spot when there's a good rhythm in something and when there's not. So we come up to his office to review something, and he'll just play it and go like, "It's too stale. We need to change it up a bit—do a drop, and then a jump, and then a roll and an attack here." He really understands that there has to be a variety of input to make something with a good flow.

Then we have gameplay elements with these bumpers that push you in a direction to tell you to keep going. We don't always force the player, but we guide them through level design to make sure they know where they're going, and we make sure that when you get there that there's a flow to it. Not every player gets the flow because sometimes it requires a high level of expertise, but I'm sure you know that when you are really doing a speed run of a level that there's just so much flow in these levels. Everything is synced. Even the moving platforms are moving in rhythm. They're all synced to the same metronome. Of course, we

can trigger it at a certain time, but they always feel like they're in rhythm with everything else.

Why do you think 2D platformers have made such a strong comeback in recent years?

■ I think there are a lot of reasons. One may be that people want different things, and they've played 3D games for a long time so they feel like 2D is refreshing. But that explanation would only suffice if it had been for one or two years and it's been a lot longer. The trend is continuing. So yeah, I think there are a lot of reasons. Another is that there's a larger audience playing games now, and 2D is easier to understand. And for example, with Legends it's easier to play with four people at the same time. If it were 3D, we would have to split the screen or have some constraints on the camera.

I think that one thing, too, is that 2D games can be connected to a certain golden age of gaming. Super Mario is really one of the big franchises that represent the history of video games. So it's like going back to one of grandma's old recipes. [Laughs] Maybe you've been eating a lot of new and different foods, but you still want to go back to that once in a while. I've personally been playing a lot of retro games lately. It's nice, but at the same time, you realize how much games have evolved. So even if it's 2D, it's not exactly the same as the 2D games we played a long time ago. Developers have learned along the way and hardware advancements allow us to do new things. So it's refreshing, and I think a lot of people like that it's a

game that's easy to play and at the same time it's bringing something new.

Looking back, what's been your personal favorite Rayman game thus far? And how would you say Legends might be able to surpass that?

■ Every Rayman game is really different. In the first one, I like the naivety and the very fresh environments and ideas. It's not very consistent, but it's fun. I like the atmosphere of Rayman 2, and we are trying to put that atmosphere in Legends now because we have this opportunity with its epic touch. We have more epic music...so we're really trying to retrieve that part of Rayman 2. I didn't work directly on Rayman 3, which was more about gags and lots of humor. But that's something I'd love to put in this game, too. It's nice to include the kinds of gags that maybe more-mature players could see as references and kind of funny. But I honestly don't have a favorite Rayman game because each of them was done in a different period with a different mind and spirit. The funny thing, though, is that we are working with guys who worked on all of the different games. Even some of the guys who worked on the first Rayman have come back.

I know this probably comes up all the time and you must be sick of it, but I think I'm required by international law to inquire about Beyond Good & Evil 2.

■ [Laughs] I think the Wii U GamePad could be used nicely as a camera... [Laughs] No, to be honest, I'm really focused on Rayman Legends right now. I'm surprised how much of our energy it's taking because I expected it to be an easier game to make. But because of the Wii U GamePad, we're really focusing on this one. I can't talk about what the next game will be for us because it's not set in stone yet, so I guess I don't have a better answer for you. Sorry! [Laughs]



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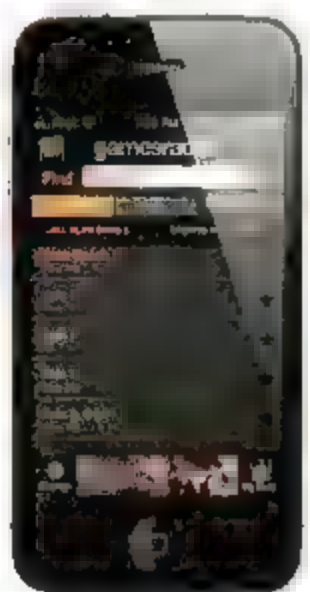
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STUCK ON



YOU

Princess Peach has gotten herself into another sticky situation. Get back in the RPG fold with **Paper Mario: Sticker Star**



It's hard to believe that it's been more than five years since the last Paper Mario adventure. Although the series began its life as a RPG, its third installment, *Super Paper Mario* for Wii, is of a traditional platformer (albeit with some light RPG elements). *Mario: Sticker Star* returns to



kidnaps Princess Peach (surprise), and runs off.

Mario immediately mounts a rescue effort, and soon comes in contact with Kersti, a flying crown who also happens to be the caretaker of the Royal Stickers, with granting elements of the comet land, of course, the kind that stuck to Bowser. Kersti decides to accompany Mario on his quest, and she proves very useful in teaching our hero how to make proper use of the many stickers that are scattered throughout the world.

Like the title suggests, stickers are the driving force behind this game, and it'll take plenty of them to save Peach. The adhesive goodies are stuck all over the place, so pay close attention to your surround-

ings. If you see one, just walk up to it and use the A Button to pick it up and place it in your album. You'll need a healthy supply of stickers, as they're what you use during combat to pull off techniques and attacks. Running low on stickers in the heat of battle will lead to an early demise. Thankfully, finding them becomes too much of a chore; you can purchase them from one of the game's shops by parting with hard-earned gold coins. Just don't get overly enthusiastic with your collection: your album holds a limited number, so keep only the stickers that you really want (although your album will gain more pages as you play).

Battles play out much like those in past Paper Mario titles. They're

The action begins on the night of Sticker Fest, an annual celebration in the Mushroom Kingdom where the paper-thin citizens gather to watch the Sticker Comet from the sky. It is said that a wish made on the comet is likely to come true. As

is often the case, Bowser and his army arrive on the scene to disrupt the party. Wanting the comet for his own, Bowser lunges towards it, but as soon as he touches the precious chunk of space debris, it shatters and its pieces fly all over the kingdom. In the ensuing chaos, a crown sticker lands on Bowser's head, transforming him into a sparkly sticker and making him more powerful than ever. With his new strength, he



STICK AND MOVE

When you have a good idea of how the game works, you can start to experiment with different combinations of stickers and moves. The game is designed to be a puzzle, so you'll need to think about the best way to use your stickers and moves to defeat your enemies.



JUMP What's Mario without jumping? This basic move lets you stomp a single foe, and a skilled player can use it to bounce multiple times. Just don't attempt it against spiked enemies.



Backward Wall
Series



MUSHROOM Feeling low on health? You'll want to keep a few Mushroom stickers in your album at all times—they're perfect for restoring your hearts after you've taken damage.



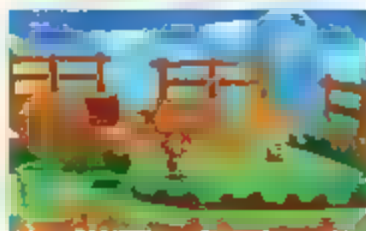
Ripe Targets



SHELL Jumping on a Koopa Shell sends it sliding across the screen, damaging all enemies in its path. Of course, it won't affect anyone who happens to be flying.



BAAHAMMER Easily identified by the lovable sheep that decorates it, the Baahammer causes your enemies to drift off to sleep. Although this leaves them open to further attacks, they also regain small bits of health while they slumber.

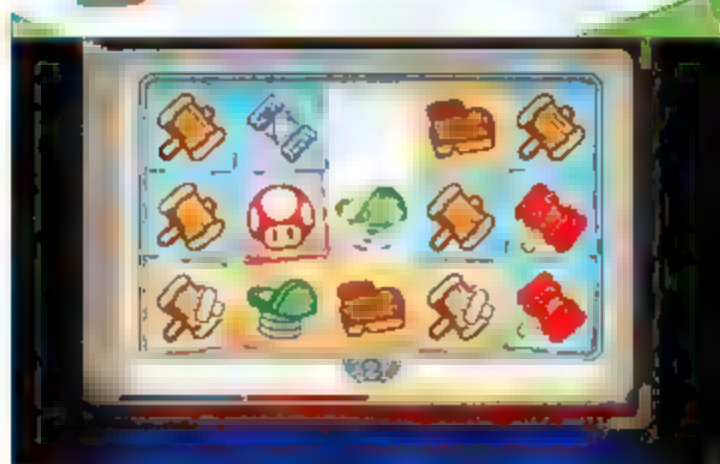


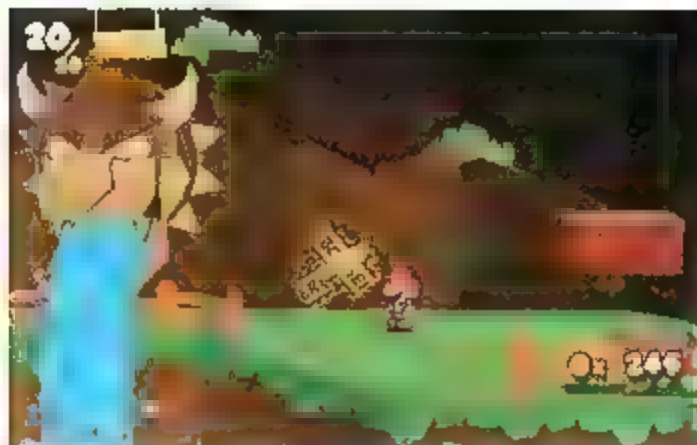
efficacy is based on their condition. If you have a worn-out sticker, the attack from it won't be as powerful as the attack from a mint-condition source. There are also special stickers that have boosted stats. These shiny and flashy varieties provide

extra punch, so save them for battles in which you need a little extra help.

turn-based, but with quick-reflex tests mixed in. To attack, you must first choose a sticker from your album. Each one has a corresponding move that you'll execute, such as a jump or a hammer attack. Tapping the A Button right before your attack is launched will inflict extra damage on your target. Likewise, when an enemy counterattacks, hitting the button just prior to the moment of impact will lessen your pain. Pay close attention to your stickers as you select them—their

Another way to tip the odds in your favor is by playing the Battle Spinner before a fight. This slot-machine style minigame consumes some of the coins that you've earned in battle or found during your journey, but by matching two or more symbols, you can earn bonus items and the opportunity to take more stickers into the fray. Having multiple attacks to use during your





away from the background and crumples it up. It's easy enough to reclaim the scrap, but returning it to its rightful place requires a special technique known as Papezation. With a press of the Y Button, your immediate surroundings will become two-dimensional and fall down like a piece of paper lying on a table. Mario and Kersti, hover above the page, allowing Mario to place something (such as the bridge) on the background. When you return the setting to normal, the added object becomes an integral part of the scene.

Paper Mario: Sticker Star does a great job of playing with its pulpy premise. Not only does the entire world look as though it's built out of construction paper and cardboard (the diorama-inspired level design also looks outstanding in 3D), but many steps are taken to emphasize the arts-and-craft-project feel. A bridge might be folded up like an accordion and sealed with a sticker.

Peeling the sticker away causes the paper to realistically bounce upward before settling down as a usable path. The paper characters can be blown around, folded, and crumpled, all of which can be used against you during battle. Some enemies roll themselves up into a cone, preventing you from jumping on them. Others fold themselves like a card, resulting in double the enemies. The first world's boss is a Goomba that combines with a troupe of his minions to form a giant Goomba with Megasparkle strength thanks to his glittery-sticker form. There are other amusing paper touches, like the fact that Koopa Troopas fold up into their shells origami-style and the way enemies are reduced to a pile of ashes after being hit with fire attacks.

As is the case with most of Mario's RPG adventures, Sticker Star is pretty humorous. The paper nature of the characters and environments is frequently used for gags, and the dialogue is consistently clever. It makes an already enjoyable game even more fun. Our childhood sticker collections may have been lost when we threw away our Trapper Keepers decades ago, but we're looking forward to returning to the hobby this fall.

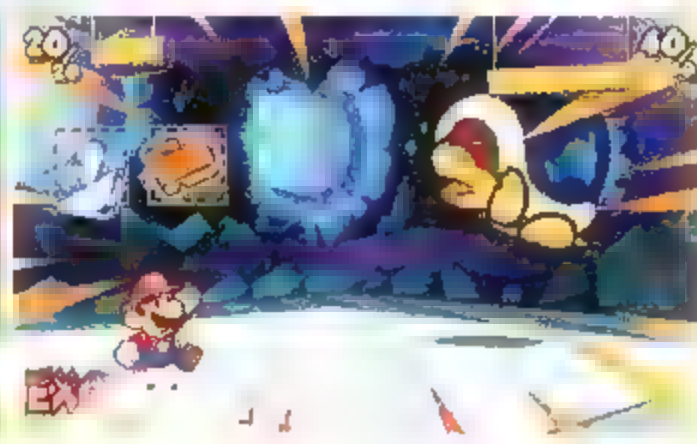
turn lets you tear through your competition.

Of course, sticker-gathering and fighting isn't all you can do in the game. This paper version of the Mushroom Kingdom is represented by an overworld map, with the town of Decalburg as the starting hub. You'll probably find yourself returning here frequently to buy and sell stickers and to chat up the local Toad populace. From Decalburg you wander off to new worlds, which are broken down into multiple levels just like in a traditional Mario platformer. Each world contains enemies to fight, stickers to find, and puzzles to solve. In World 1-3, for example, a large waterspout in

the shape of Bowser's head blocks your progress. Only by finding a way to turn it off can you proceed.

The ultimate goal of each stage is to collect the comet piece at the end to help reconstruct the Sticker Corner. Occasionally, you will stumble across odd, three-dimensional objects like scissors, a faucet, and a trumpet (drolly categorized as Things in the game). These unique finds can be transformed into stickers and used to solve puzzles. Need a powerful gust of wind? Why not turn that fan you found into a useful sticker?

Sometimes important parts of the world will be missing (or silent). At one point Bowser Jr. tears a bridge





To Live and Die in London

Ubisoft puts survival back into the survival-horror genre with the Mature-rated
Wii U launch title **ZombiU**.

[illegible]

That initial White Rabbit idea evolved into *Killer Freaks from Outer Space*, a fast-paced, over-the-top first person shooter in which the earth is invaded by little green gremlinlike aliens. Many who saw the game at E3 2011 were intrigued, but the folks at Ubisoft Montpellier started recognizing flaws with the game they designed for the Wii U.

system and its accompanying Wii U GamePad controller, Caro explains. "It was hard for people to [get used to] the system with two screens because old players are used to watching only the TV screen. So now they have to watch two screens at the same time, and if you make a crazy shooter, a really fast hardcore shooter — was not working because

no one was watching the GamePad screen," Gounon recalls. "We were thinking, 'This Killer Freaks, the game is a bit arcadey, the controller is not yet well integrated, so what can we do?'"

Some brainstorming was in order. Caro and Zombi, art director Florent Sacré, who have been working together since

2003's *Beyond Good & Evil* took a week away from the office to come up with a new concept that would address these concerns. Their solution? Zombies. (Or rather infected; the developers point out that this apocalyptic scenario is the result of a second Black Plague, in which only five





percent of the population hasn't been transformed into monsters.) Not only are zombies slow-moving opponents—which allows players to get accustomed to the dual-screen gameplay—but the London-based zombie-apocalypse setting (see the “London Calling” sidebar) also allowed the developers to utilize the GamePad in a clever way: as a survival kit. The tools you need

to help you stay alive—weapons, maps, scanner, etc.—are right there on the GamePad. “If you play with the survival kit, you will survive,” says Caro. “That’s it. That’s the rule. There are no other rules.”

THE THICK OF IT

Unfortunately for me, I didn’t follow that rule as closely as I should have when I played the

demo, set in Buckingham Palace. The love begins with the player-controlled plague survivor, who was purposely designed to be an everyman. Standing in a hallway in the palace, the first thing I do is pick up an M1 carbine lying on the ground next to some dead zombies. As I do not have a lot of ammo for either my newly acquired rifle or my handgun (just two of the 15

weapons in the game), I hold L on the GamePad to bring up the scanner, allowing me to see hidden items on the corpses. It’s a zombie apocalypse, after all, so I have to grab everything I can. The scanner is also equipped with a blacklight that reveals hidden messages. One such communiqué is a series of arrows pointing toward a side room in which there’s a ladder leading up to an opened vent. As I’m about to crawl into the air duct, however, a zombie grabs my leg and drags me through to the room on the other side of the vent.

Against a single foe, your best bet is the cricket bat; there’s no risk of wasting precious bullets, and using a melee weapon means no gunshots that can draw the attention of any other infected in the vicinity. These zombies are drawn to both sounds and light, so you can, for instance, throw a flare to distract them. Plus, Caro points out, the cricket bat gives you a sense of sweet revenge. “As you are playing as this weak [person], you cannot do anything. We wanted the player to feel the strength of beating a zombie with a cricket bat. This time you die, you say, ‘This time it’s you!’ kill you!”



LONDON CALLING



London, England, is certainly no stranger to the zombie apocalypse: after all, there's stuff like the film *28 Days Later* and the British TV miniseries *Dead Set*, both of which helped inspire Zombill's creative leads JP Cano and Florent Sacré. But why would a studio based in Montpellier, France, set a game in London? International brand manager Loïc Gomon explains: "We started in London with *Killer Freaks*... so we decided to keep London for Zombill. Most of the zombie games take place in the US, especially in shopping malls.... It might be exotic for American people to go play in another city. And everybody knows London, and the Olympic Games took place there in 2012. So why not London?" Furthermore, because guns are not readily available in England, the developers reasoned that it would make sense that the protagonists are equipped with firearms, and only become skilled with repeated use (hence the leveling-up system).

[Laughs] I bludgeoned my opponent and then finish him off with a blow to the head by holding ZR when the onscreen prompt appears.

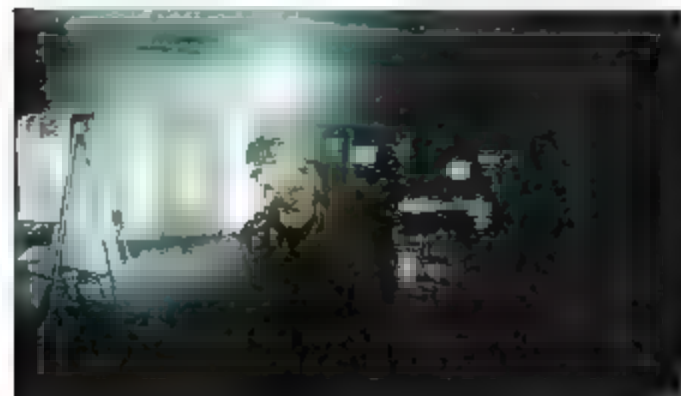
There's a landmine in this room, so grab it and return to the main path. At the end of the hall to the right is a massive room that has a handful of baddies shuffling about inside. After tapping the cube's icon on the touch screen—thereby equipping myself with the rifle—bring up the targeting reticle by holding ZL and shoot an enemy in the head with a tap of ZR. The eerie piano notes that have been playing since the beginning of the demo cease as soon as fire that's because the zombie I just shot was banging its arm against some piano

keys. Creating the sound is a nice touch of humor from the folks who brought you the Raving Rabbids.

The shot also catches the attention of my victim's undead buddies. As I'm trying to dispatch the infected with my firearms, get fix with something that aids the TV screen. It turns out a black-gunk-exploiting zombie has entered the room. My priority then becomes to stop his new adversary: side-stepping's spew so I can actually see my target. Once all the enemies are defeated, have time to grab loot from their bodies and run up a flight of stairs, neutralizing all the infected standing between me and the door to the next area. Suddenly another special zombie appears,

covered from head to toe in police riot gear. This armored foe's only weak point is its head—and even then you have to blast its helmet off to reach the vulnerable bits.

Ultimately I end up sprinting and trying to dodge the remaining zombies, as I had not done a good job of conserving ammo and ammunition dangerously low at this point. It was playing the game like a traditional FPS because old habits die hard. I finally make my way to the end goal: a locked door with a numeric keypad. On the wall a three numbers scratched in blood: "462" but the fourth number on the code is illegibly smeared. As I learned later, it had taken my time. I could have discovered the whole code by using the blacklight on a painting in the beginning of the demo. In addition, the blacklight could have shown me arrows that lead to a hidden room housing a crossbow. As I'm frantically trying to enter the numbers on the touch screen, I look up at the TV and see my character





from a third-person perspective as a gang of zombies closes in on him, making it hard for me to input the code as my anxiety level rises. Of course, heightening the tension is the whole reason for the using his shift in the camera's perspective (which happens during disorienting moments, such as when you're imagining through your backpack's goggles). In the beginning, when we had problems with players playing with the TV

and the GamePad, we decided to put some messages on the TV to make them look down. So you were never playing on two screens at the same time. But when we were trying to create more fear and tension in the game, we came to a point that this was not tense enough. Watching only one screen at a time was too easy. So I was like, 'All right, things were a little easier at this point, eventually the zombie horde overwhelms me and it's game over

BORN AGAIN

Win's game over for that particular survivor anyway. When you die, you immediately turn into a new character. Quantum Leap-style and wake up in your same house. The first three characters you can play as are the same in every playthrough (see the 'Dead Space' sidebar), but Carol tells us that the rest are randomly generated. "You have a random combination of heads, colors, skin, clothing, names, everything,

Everything is mixed, so you won't have the same character again."

You might think this rebirth mechanic will make things really easy, especially because the world is persistent (meaning the doors you've unlocked before remain unlocked, for example). But there are some disadvantages to being reborn. Your character levels up as you use firearms, improving your reloading, aiming, and overall shooting abilities. However, you go

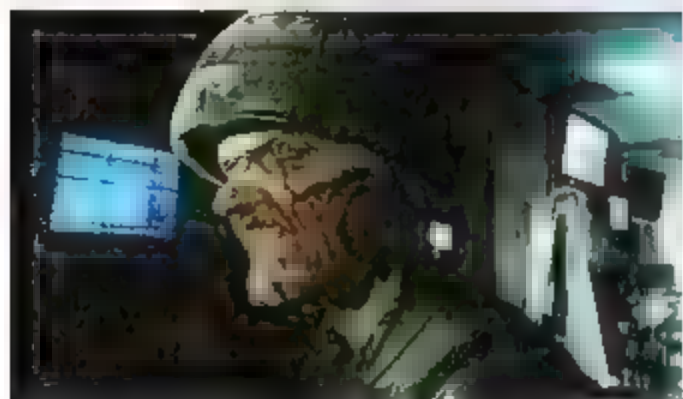


DEAD ALIVE

The first three survivors you can play as in *ZombiU* appear in the same sequence in every playthrough: there's what JC Caro calls "a classical hero guy," a young woman, and an old man. Caro explains that the reason for this is so players can compare with their friends how well they're performing in the main campaign. If you're skilled enough, however, you might never die. Accomplishing this seemingly impossible feat should adequately prepare you for an even greater challenge: the unlockable Survivor mode, in which you play through the single-player campaign with only one life. When you die, you aren't reborn: the credits roll, your save file is erased, and you start over from the very beginning.



(Below) Fun fact: The zombies' vocals are provided by death-metal singers.



back to square one when you switch to a new survivor. Other than that, you don't have any of the items you acquire with your survivors, character-specific items such as the rocket bike. This is because the survivors are somewhat by-the-book items in the big blue box in your safehouse. To get your hands on that your own zombie character has in his backpocket, though, such as that aforementioned rocket bike, you'll have to eliminate him and find his corpse.

Because the main character is ever-changing, it's difficult to use the protagonists to tell the story. The developers decided instead to deliver the plot through nonplayer

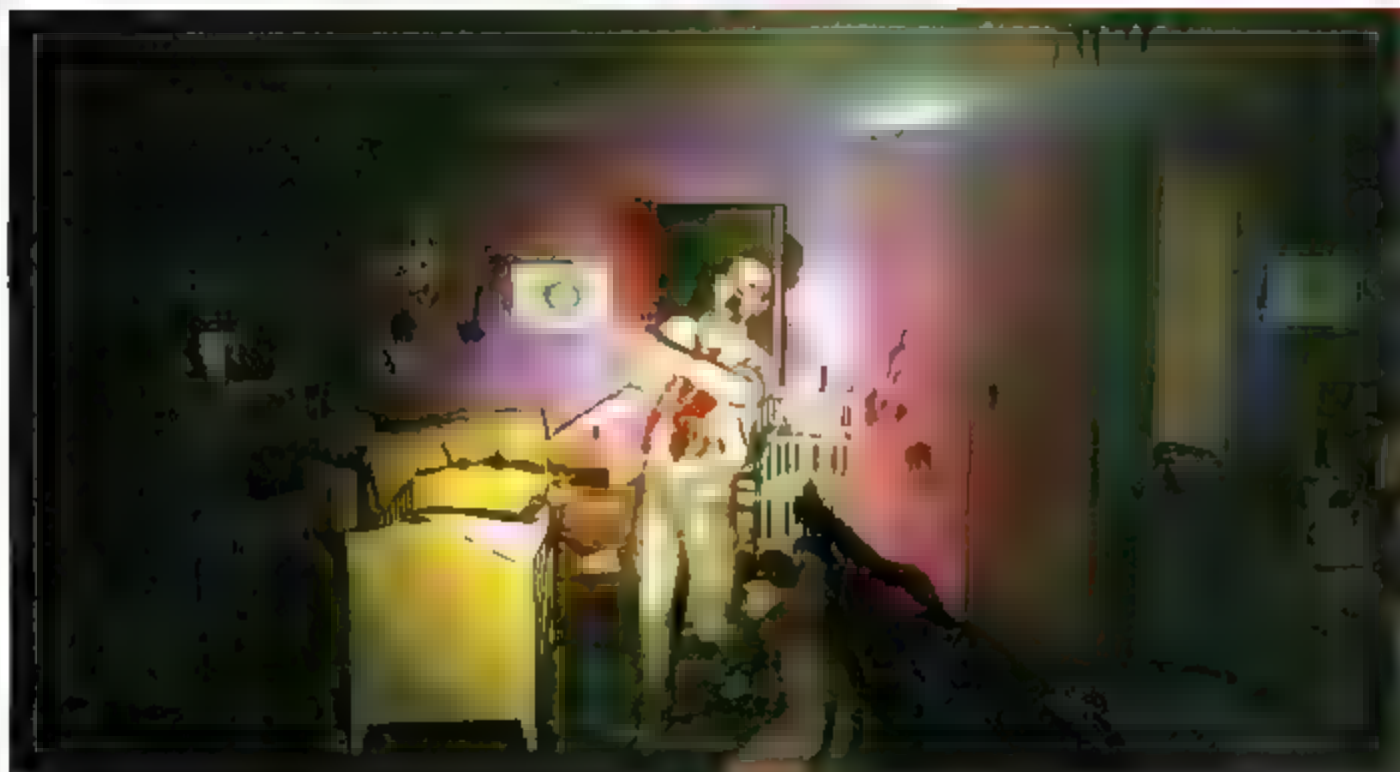
characters, each of whom has a specific viewpoint. Those survivors that we've absided during a survival exercise have posed the question: What if the zombie apocalypse actually happened, what if you were stuck in the middle of a zombie town? Some of us wanted to stay back as helpers and make sure survivors like me waiting for the army or some one else to solve the problem. And this is why you're not moving. This is the philosophy of the prepper in the game. He's telling you: Stay here, I'm going to fear you how to stay here and survive. Explore your territory around your safe house and do not move. Survive here. And then we had some people from the

core team trying to escape from Montpellier and just go to another town, because perhaps the problem is not there. So they were trying to escape the problem. This was the second philosophy of surviving with zombies. Sandra is one of the NPCs you can meet in the game and she's [telling] you how to escape the town. Some times you'll play some missions with her to try to escape the city. Some of us was really

surprised by this, wanted to find a hero. They wanted to learn about the world. So we put the focus in the game.

The copper is the first person you encounter in the game, begins with you getting away from zombies and the mission continues with a wave of not like what you did's you're very close to the mission with you and the doctor and complete missions





for them. (There are 17 missions in all, and the game's total length is estimated to be around 15 hours.)

ANARCHY IN THE UK

During that team survey, Caro and Sacre discovered that some people were "totally insane" and were happy that the zombie apocalypse had arrived because it meant that all the rules went out the window. "We

fired them," jokes Sacre. Inspired by this anarchist perspective—as well as by works such as *The Road*—the developers created a fourth NPC, named King Boris. You never see his demented highness, but he plays an integral role in *ZombiU*'s multiplayer mode. Here, two people go head-to-head asymmetrically: the survivor focuses on the TV and uses the Wii U Pro Controller, playing the game like

a traditional first-person shooter; the zombie master plays it like a real-time-strategy game on the GamePad touch screen. There are three flags on each of the five multiplayer maps (the two played were a rooftop and a soccer stadium). You earn a point for capturing a flag, and the first to earn four points wins.

As the survivor, you choose your loadout (I went with the handgun,

shotgun-grenade combo, but I could have gone with the carbine instead of the shotgun), and then hold positions at flags while dispatching the zombies that your opponent throws at you. As you level up within the multiplayer portion only, none of the levels you earn here carry over into the single-player game; you are rewarded with items such as med kits and autoturrets. The other are



NEVERMORE

Ravens are a recurring theme in *ZombiU*, and that stems from a legend that if the ravens ever leave the Tower of London, the tower will crumble and a great disaster will befall England. The propper is a former member of a secret organization called the Ravens of Dee (named after Queen Elizabeth I's consultant John Dee, the presumed origin of the legend), and Sandra, the propper's ex-wife, is the head of the Ravens of Dee. Actual ravens appear on your radar as red dots, as do rats, so you might mistake them for zombies. This can be useful, though, as both ravens and rats can be sources of health-replenishing food. But be warned: some of these creatures carry the virus, so your health might take a hit should you decide to chow down.



useful for crowd control because you can just leave them near flags and let them do their thing. (There is a turret at specific points in the single-player portion, too, but you direct this manned machine gun by physically moving the GamePad.)

When playing as the zombie master, had to keep an eye on resources. They are always regenerating automatically, but deploying the infected consumes resources quickly (not to mention that you're allowed only a certain number of zombies on the battlefield at once). (Fortunately, you can delete them to make room for new ones.) You start out with three variations: blue ones are the cheapest, but they just stand guard over wherever you placed them; white ones are slightly costlier basic grunts that chase the survivor; and the very expensive red ones capture flags, leveling up grants you access to more powerful types, including sprinting, armored,



spitting, and explosive zombies.

The multiplayer in *ZombiU* is not limited to this local multiplayer mode, however: there is some online functionality, too. When you are offed in the single-player game, for instance, your zombie'd character can wander into your friends' games (and vice versa). You get updates on your character's activities, whether it has defeated your pals, for example, or whether it has been eliminated and had its soul freed. Additionally, you can write messages to other players via symbols in order to avoid the stereotypical message-board shenanigans that can be revealed with the blacklight. In much the same way as in *Buckingham Palace*, these messages are aimed at providing helpful information—directing you

to hidden areas, for instance—but the development team is well aware that rolling call outs. To help combat this, a voting system allows folks to mark messages as either trustworthy or untrustworthy. Of course, the voters themselves could be lying to you.

This omnipresent sense of unease, the developer's emphasis, is what they are trying to evoke. Unlike games in which you can easily mow down zombies, *ZombiU* is about surviving when the odds are always against you, and about the emotions that accompany that. "We always thought of emotions," Sacré says. "Always." It's its direction and the way the game exemplifies the Wii U hardware's uniqueness that makes *ZombiU* my most anticipated Wii U launch title.



Power Profiles

November 17, 1973

Tokyo, Japan

Planner/director/scenario writer,
Spike Chunsoft

Creating 999 and Virtue's Last Reward:
giving unusual interview answers about
his wife

Root-beer float
(not really)

Secret



Kotaro Uchikoshi

Reward, published by Aksys Games.

How did you originally get into the video game business?

I dropped out of college before I graduated. Was it because when I looked at my future, the road ahead seemed shrouded in darkness? No—in fact, the problem was that the road ahead was so bright that I could see the entire path unfolding in front of me. Now I realize that what I was seeing was nothing more than an optical illusion, but at the time it seemed very real and persuasive.

It was a track that ran straight through a desert. The sun beating down upon it was so strong that I could see all the way to the final station at the terminus. I remember being in despair over this. It was so bright that I couldn't see any hope at all—I was completely terrified. Being able to see that final station was like going through life with the prospect of death constantly dangling in front of me.

So I decided to disappear into the darkness. I would step off the tracks and plunge into a darkness that was so thick I wouldn't be able to see where I was going at all. It was like a deep forest or a dank underground cave. Being unable to see where I was going put my heart at ease and finally allowed me to relax. The sense that my path would be determined by my own decisions and actions was a feeling I wouldn't have traded for anything. But you can't blaze a trail with empty hands. To proceed through a dungeon, first you need a torch. And I chose for games to be that torch.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

In my elementary school yearbook, I wrote "film director" under future ambitions. What I really wanted to be was a red knight—but couldn't speak English, so I had to abandon that dream.

What are some of

the experiences you had when young that formed you as a person?

When I was 10 years old, I started lying to my parents and going to Kabukicho (Tokyo's red light district) to see movies by myself. I was lucky not to have been kidnapped or something. I think that experience helped spark my love of darkness, danger, and adventure.

Do you consider yourself a writer first, or a game designer first?

I like them both, so, of course, they both come first. The one thing I don't like is that a game designer has some producer-like responsibilities and is terrible at that. Tweaking numbers on some Excel spreadsheet, haggling with outsourcing companies—can't someone else handle that?

What compelled you to become a video game writer?

For my first industry job, I actually started as

a planner. One day my boss told me, "You seem like the sort of guy who could write a good game story. Why don't you try doing one?" He said it like it was no big deal, just an offhand comment like, "Hey, it's starting to rain, you should bring in your laundry." And just like that, my writing career was born.

Do you have any interest in working with other video game genres?

I do want to make an action-adventure. Actually, it isn't so much that I want to make a game in the action-adventure genre as it is that there's a specific project I've been wanting to make, and in order to make it happen, it has to be an action-adventure.

The design document is already written, and it's been pretty well received by the people I've shown it to, so I'm confident that somehow, in some form or another, it will get made. Please look forward to it.

How does the process of writing visual-novel games compare to other forms of writing?

I don't really have much experience working with other mediums, so it's hard for me to answer. But unlike novels, as visual-novel writers, we deal with things like

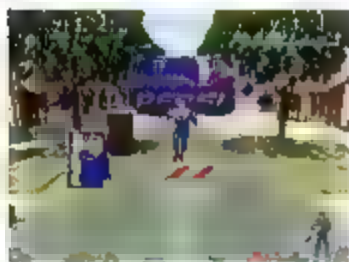
background graphics and props and character assets, and have to craft their stories around the possible combinations of those materials.

It's different from writing manga and anime too. In those mediums, you're free to do whatever you want with your characters: get them wet, drench them in blood, cover them in wounds, etc. You can introduce new minor characters whenever you want. Games aren't like that. Characters can only perform the limited assortment of actions that were part of your original plan. It's difficult to make a visual novel unless its story naturally involves a strictly limited number of environments and characters.

In a past interview you referred to some Japanese visual novels that you felt are "more interesting than 999."

What are they, and how did they influence you? For older games, I would say *One~Kagayaku Kisetsu e*, *Kanon*, and *EVE Burst Error*. For more recent games, I would say *Steins;Gate* and, while I hate to plug a game made by my own company, early *enjoyed Dangan Ronpa*. I wouldn't say I was "influenced" by those games so much as I was violently pummeled by them. They had the

GAMEOGRAPHY



PEPSIMAN
3D MODELER



MEMORIES OFF
SCENARIO WRITER



NEVER7: THE END OF INFINITY
ORIGINAL SCENARIO



CLOSE TO MY PRAYER HILL
ORIGINAL SCENARIO

Power Profiles



same impact on me that I remember the Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey* having on me when I was younger.

Novels don't have pictures. Manga doesn't have audio. Films aren't interactive, so they can't pull you into their stories. That's what visual novels do. The titles I've listed above are the ones that show us just how interesting the genre can be.

Who is your favorite character in 999 or Virtue's Last Reward?

I get this question a lot, but I can't answer it. Now, there is a character that I consider to be my absolute favorite in the series. But I feel so much sympathy for this character, and so much sorrow for him or her, that if I even think about this character, I burst into tears.

In the last few interviews we've had, you've mentioned your wife a few times. How did you two meet? And does she read your interviews?

We met when we were shot by Cupid's arrow. And that Cupid was Russian.

Does she read my interviews? If she did, she wouldn't be alive to answer this question! And the thing is, she's actually very good at English, so I live in constant fear for my life.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?

[When I started, the Japanese game industry—and maybe this was true in America too—was like an underground society for outcasts. It was a club for people who couldn't accept reality, couldn't cope with reality, couldn't communicate with the people in reality, or all of the above. At least that's how it seemed to me. Despite having talents in programming, or graphics, or writing, or sound design, or perhaps because of those talents—they couldn't function in the outside world and wound up in the game industry instead. They mocked established conventions and rebelled against contemporary values in an amusing and yet deadly serious way. Indeed, they made a mockery of society, self. I grew to love those

guys. The community they had established was a place where I could feel at home. I thought, "This is exactly where I belong."

But in recent years, that underground society has been crumbling away. There are a variety of reasons for this, but the biggest one is that the video game industry has matured, and is being absorbed into conventional society. To put it bluntly, the industry has been invaded by banks and investors who are

It has to keep adventuring. After all, adventures are what we're in the business of selling!

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?

Every aspect of game development is fun, and at the same time, every aspect of game development is absolutely excruciating. In a way, it's just like being in love.

When you're stumped by a particularly

"D..."

...set some how. It must be

ad

chasing the profit potential of games, and now the goal of game companies has shifted from "let's make interesting things" to "let's make whatever will sell." Of course, I don't have any objection to corporations trying to make a profit. But what of the underground society that I loved so much? That side of the game industry is teetering at the brink of annihilation.

The dark forest has been cleared; the dungeon has been dug up, and now that's all bathed in bright sunlight. "Hey, it's brighter now," they say. "Now we don't have to worry about monsters anymore. Let's start laying train tracks!" But the game industry mustn't ever settle down.

difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?

How does one solve a tough problem? By falling asleep.

We may believe that our conscious minds are actively pondering things, but in truth, the conscious mind is nothing more than a spectator. There are a countless number of subconscious mental processes that are doing the actual thinking, and it's this collection of mental processes that are truly running the show.

Or at least, that's what I read in an article recently. That's right. This is just hearsay. [laughs]

What other games or game creators do you

most admire, and why? The writer of *Steins;Gate*, Naotaka Hiyashi, and the writer of *Dangan Ronpa*, Kazutaka Kodaka. Why? Because they're gods.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?

Lately, it's been pretty much all movies. *Rebirth*, *Confessions*, *The Detective Is in the Bar*, *Tower Heist*, *Drive*, *The Artist*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Love Exposure*.

K-On! *Kick Ass*. Films like that.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?

Playing with my daughter, guess. Lately we've been playing *Snow White*. Our game plays out a little differently from the movie, in the end *Snow White* creates the poison apple and makes the witch eat.

That, and Twitter. I even use my terrible English powers to attempt to answer questions in English. So please don't hesitate to drop me a message at @uchikoshi.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

Jedi Force powers, of course.

GAMEOGRAPHY



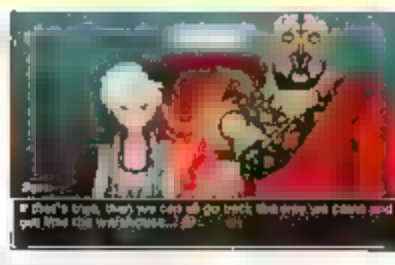
EVER 17: OUT OF INFINITY
SCENARIO WRITER



999: THE ULTIMATUM OF INTEGRAL
ORIGINAL STORY, SCRIPT WRITER,
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR



NINE HOURS, NINE PERSONS,
NINE DOORS
DIRECTOR, PLANNER, SCENARIO WRITER



ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD
DIRECTOR, SCENARIO WRITER

You might know **Joshua.**

He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

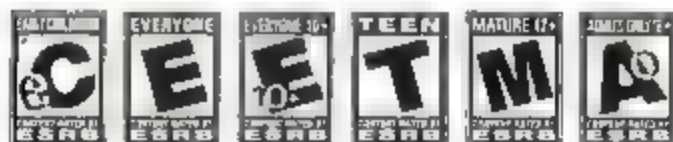


AC

Los Angeles, CA



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
RATING BOARD



PLAY BACK

REVISITING THE CLASSICS



Have a
neutral day?



Faceball 2000

A first-person shooter for Game Boy
On a scale of 1 to 10

GAME BOY
KANTH SOFTWARE LTD
QUIET ORDER SOFTWARE
DECEMBER 1991
23, 26, 33, 36, 37

People often credit Wolfenstein 3D with popularizing the first-person shooter, but it was hardly the origin. The genre actually has roots that date back to the mid-70s, but one of the earliest titles to bear a resemblance to the FPS games of today is *Midnight Maze*, which was created by Kanth Software in 1987 for the Atari ST computer. Four years later, the company created a version of the game for Nintendo's original Game Boy under the futuristic (at the time) name *Faceball 2000*.

The title comes from the fact that the player character and all of the enemies are "Have a nice day"-style smiley faces. Sure, they may come in shapes other than spherical here, but they all share that same vacant grin at



ROVER
TAGS
That creepy, grinning face helps keep the action family-friendly. It also ensures that you'll always score a headshot.

least until they get shot a couple of times. The contrast between these symbols of happiness and engaging in a deathmatch is definitely humorous, and it's a convenient way to skirt potential violence issues.

Compared to modern shooters, *Faceball 2000* is incredibly simple. There are two game modes: *Cyberscape* and *Arena*. The former is a single-player experience that tasks you with maneuvering through a maze to find the exit. Early on, the stationary, unarmed enemies merely serve as obstacles, but more dangerous foes are introduced as you progress. The real meat of the game is in the multiplayer *Arena*

mode, where it's every face for itself. Here you have the option to play against AI opponents or against your friends. *Faceball 2000* is the only Game Boy title that allows a whopping 16 people to play simultaneously. Of course, this requires multiple Game Boy Four Player Adapters, plenty of Link Cables, and well, 16 Game Boy systems and copies of the game. So yeah, it's highly unlikely that many consumers were able to take advantage of that feature.

Perhaps the multiplayer was a little overambitious, and the 3D graphics look extremely primitive today, but in 1991 both were mighty impressive. *Faceball 2000* is worthy of recognition as an innovator in portable gaming. —PHIL T.

FOUR SCORE

You probably never enjoyed a 16-player *Faceball 2000* match, but there's a better chance that you were able to experience these four-player Game Boy titles.



This game came packaged with the Game Boy Four Player Adapter, making it the showstopper title for the multilayer necessary.



TITLE: Super R.C. Pro-Am
RELEASE DATE: 1991

was a hit on the NES, and its sequel did a fine job of following up on the success.



In this puzzle game, you design line-shaped sweets by manipulating rows and columns of them.

For **Juri**, the big letter on the box is a good start. But sometimes she wants to know more about the games **Sean** and _____ want to play. And now she can, **right from her phone**, right from the store.

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Juri
Lakeside, CA



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
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Mike Mignola talks all things Hellboy

SIDEKICK

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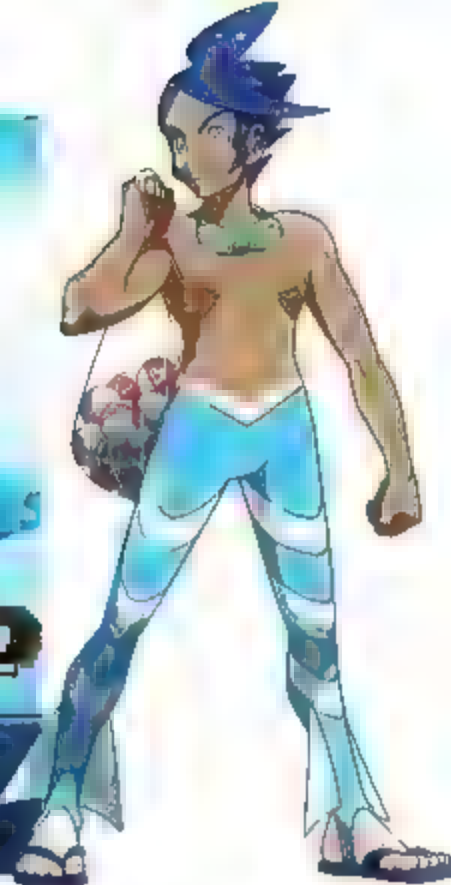
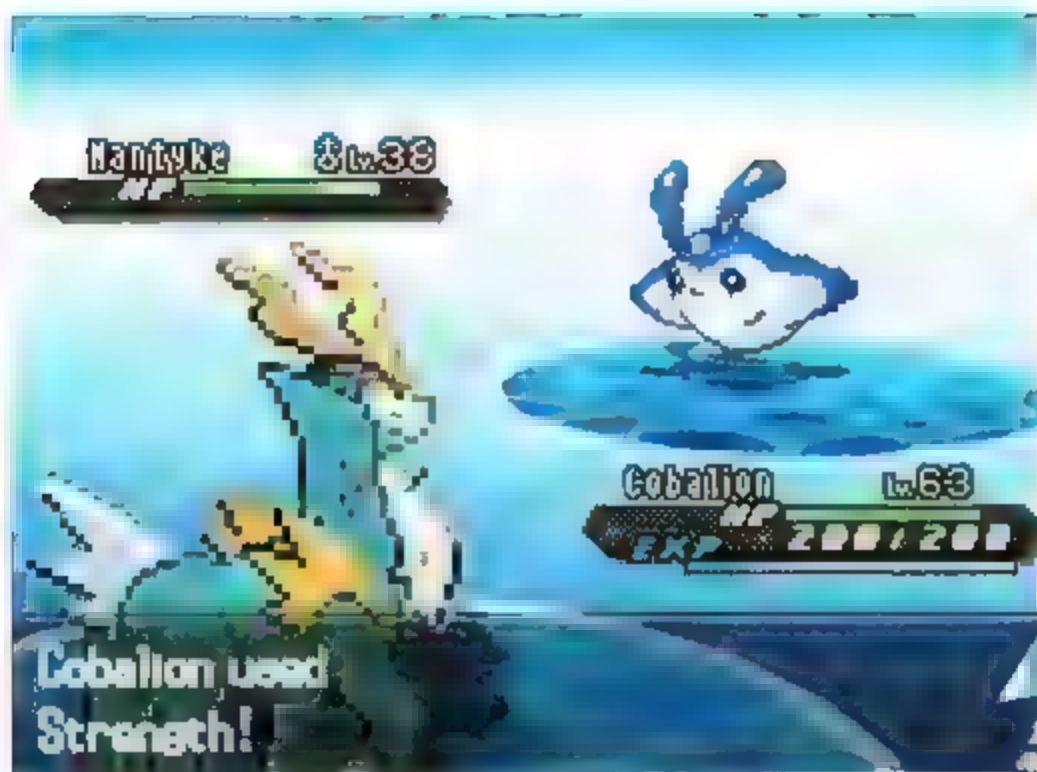


POKÉMON
BLACK 2
VERSION



POKÉMON
WHITE 2
VERSION

We pay a return visit to the Unova region in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2. Turn the page for our full travelogue!



A Brighter Shade of Gray

POKEMON BLACK VERSION 2 AND WHITE VERSION 2

8.0 I imagine that somewhere in the Tokyo offices of Pokémon developer Game Freak, there's a framed sheet of parchment on which the Japanese equivalent of "If It Ain't Broke Don't Fix It" has been written with dramatic strokes of a calligraphy brush. It's a mantra that has served

the company well, keeping the Pokémon series alive and growing for five game generations by focusing on adding features, refining the gameplay experience, and upgrading graphics while leaving the core mechanics, structure, and story of every installment basically unchanged. But after four generations of following marquee releases with slightly remixed editions (like 2009's Pokémon Platinum

Version), Game Freak has finally broken, succeeding Pokémon Black Version and White Version with numbered follow-ups instead of a remixed "Gray" version that some fans may have been anticipating. The result is a pair of significantly more interesting games than their remixed edition would have been, ones that may leave fans wishing Game Freak had sustained

that innovative spirit and fixed a few other Pokémon traditions too.

Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 are set two years after their predecessors, in the same region of Unova. In the intervening years, a chunk of Unova forestland has been bulldozed to make room for a few new towns and routes. Several existing towns and routes have been drastically remodeled, and a few freshly blazed paths lead to novel

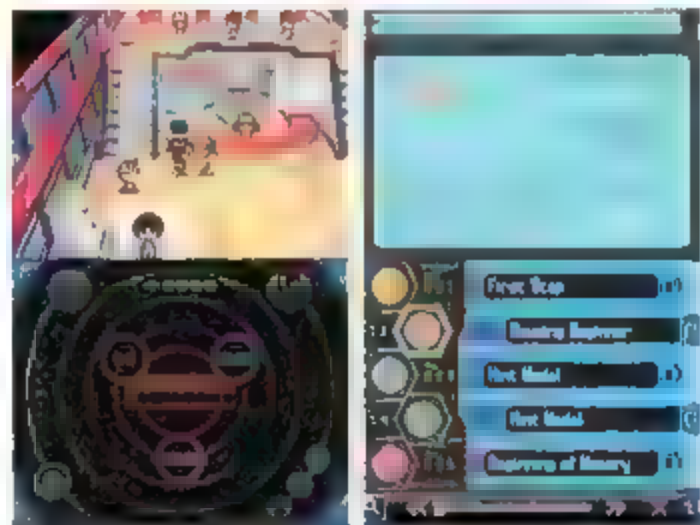


Heavy Medals

VERSION 2. YOU'LL BE AWARDED A MEDAL CASE THAT

YOU CAN EARN MEDALS FOR COMPLETING LOAD SIGNS AND APPEARING IN MUSICALS FOR TACKLING ACHIEVEMENTS LIKE CAPTURING POKÉMON OF A CERTAIN TYPE OR EVOLVING A CERTAIN NUMBER OF POKÉMON, AND FOR COMBAT VICTORIES IN AREAS LIKE THE BATTLE SUBWAY OR POKÉMON WORLD TOUR. HAPPIEST OF ALL, YOU CAN COLLECT YOUR MEDALS AT ANY POKÉMON CENTER, WHERE YOU'LL ALSO BE REWARDED WITH HINT MEDALS.

THE MEDAL SYSTEM IS A GREAT WAY TO REWARD PLAYERS FOR COMPLETING CHALLENGES AND IT'S A GREAT WAY TO REWARD PLAYERS FOR COMPLETING CHALLENGES AND IT'S A GREAT WAY TO REWARD PLAYERS FOR COMPLETING CHALLENGES.



you've connected set up shop and sell unique items. And the Pokémon World Tournament offers a variety of flashy challenges against scores of famous Trainers from throughout Pokémon-series history.

Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 don't offer much in terms of entirely new Pokémon, although they do offer a few alternate versions of old Pokémon (ones that have otherwise unattainable moves or abilities). Instead, the game features an expanded Pokédex that brings back hundreds of Pokémon from past games and

sprinkles them in among the Unova natives to make sure players have different options with which to fill out their rosters as they progress through the game. With the largest roster of catchable Pokémon ever, Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 offer a rare opportunity for first-time players to build up a large Pokémon collection without having to do extensive trading with seasoned veterans.

Other new features include a Medal system that offers hundreds of goals for players who want to delve deeply into the game, the



(Above) Skyia's new gym is in an airplane hanger blasted by heavy winds.



designations. Pokémon Black Version and White Version veterans have seen the majority of the game's locations before, but it's still fun to revisit old towns to see what's changed and catch up with old friends. Hidden grottos that offer opportunities to snag hard-to-get items and

catch special Pokémon have been scattered throughout the game's world, giving players a reason to thoroughly explore the backroads of Unova anew. Additionally, all eight of the Gyms have been drastically redesigned, with each featuring a different gimmick and a very attractive visual makeover. The Dungeon areas are mostly unchanged, and not much fun to revisit, but do feature different Pokémon to catch, Trainers to challenge, and items to gather.

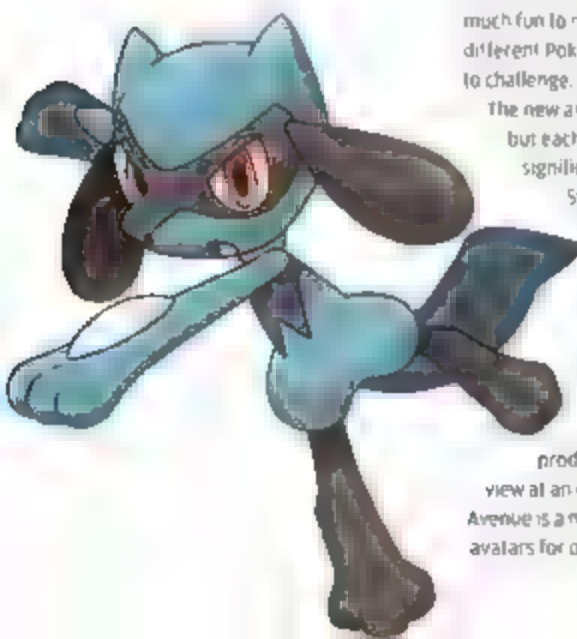
The new areas aren't numerous, but each does offer something significant to do. PokéStar Studios allows players

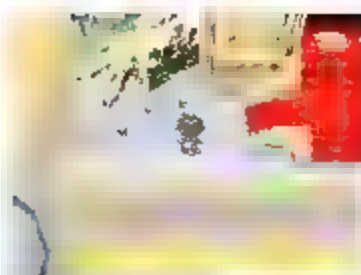
and their Pokémon to star in special-effect "stadium

films, performing moves in front of a green screen to create

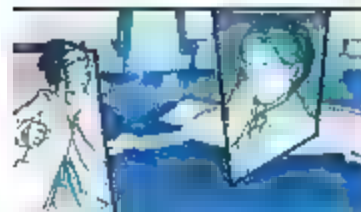
footage that is used in

slick Hollywood-style productions for players to view at an onsite theater. Join Avenue is a marketplace where the avatars for other players with whom

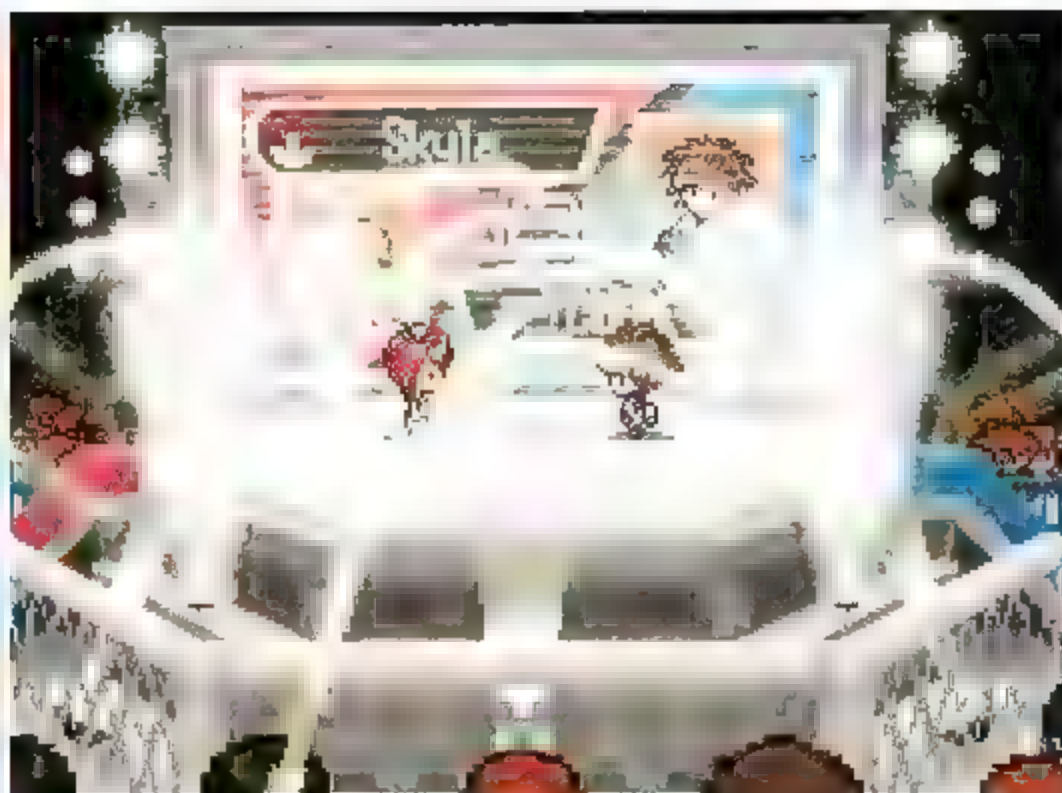




PokéStar Studio lets Trainers star in slickly produced Hollywood blockbusters like this sci-fi flick.



ability to perform co-op quests with other players over a wireless connection, and a high-level random dungeon area that is ideal for leveling up Pokémon and earning valuable stat-boosting items.

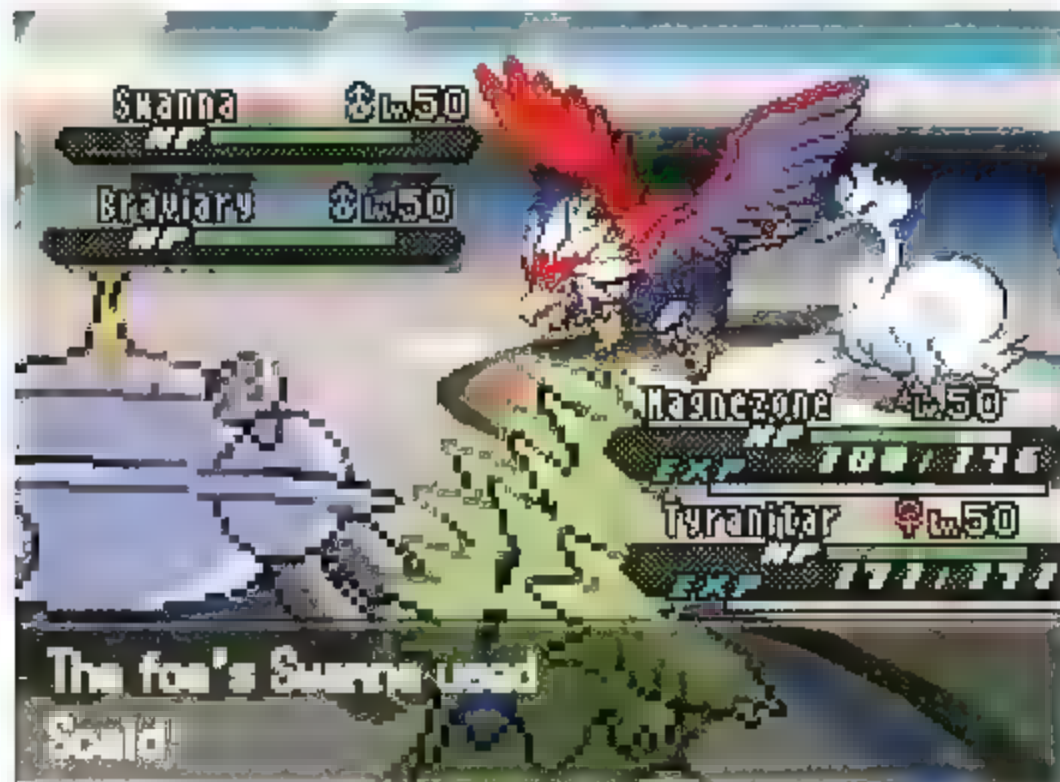


There are even unlockable difficulty settings that can be traded from player to player (the harder difficulty is available in Pokémon Black Version 2, the easier in White Version 2) to give strong players an added challenge or weak players a way to take on some of the difficult late-game content. These features, along with the expanded roster of Pokémon,

combine to give players an unprecedented selection of things to do after the credits have rolled. If you're the type that's driven to fill up your Pokédex, earn all the Medals, and craft a masterful team of Level-100 Pokémon, you'll find hundreds of hours of gameplay in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2, all with a much better sense of progression than

any previous title has offered.

The additions in Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 are excellent, and since they mostly supplement the features of their predecessors without replacing





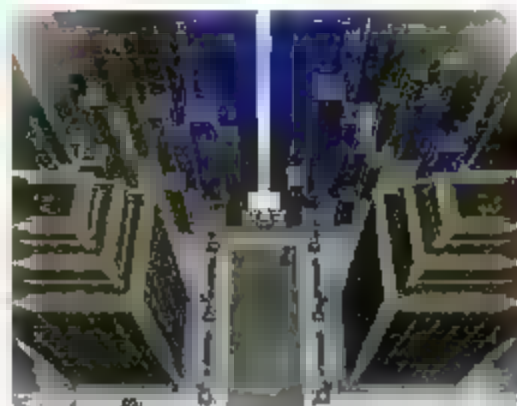
The Quest Goes On... And On... And On...

Players who want to explore the new, larger dungeons will find exactly what they seek in the new, larger dungeons. The new dungeons are the Hollow areas of Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2, respectively. Both areas are dungeons with increasingly larger and more challenging floors than those in the previous iterations of the series, and each is filled with enemy Pokémon Trainers. One of these Trainers is a gate guard who can open the gate to the boss of the floor, but in order to pass the gate guard you have to piece together clues from defeated Trainers, who can only point you in a general direction, tell you the guard's gender, or describe the room they're in. Once you defeat the gate guard, you have to find the gate and defeat the boss Trainer beyond it to clear the floor and earn a reward.

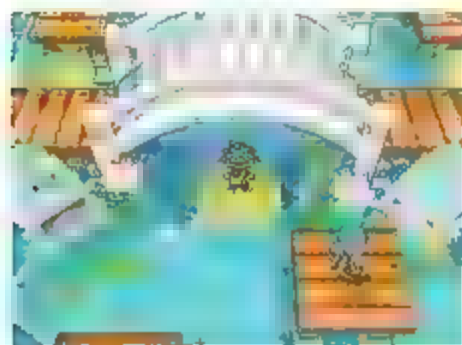
You can't use any recovery items in these dungeons, so while every Trainer challenge gets you closer to your quarry, it also leaves you in worse shape for the next challenge. Fortunately, one doctor per floor will heal your Pokémon, but only once and only if you defeat him in battle. These dungeons are the most significant challenges in the game, and since the floors are randomized each time you play, you can challenge them over and over in to level up.



them, these games offer a much richer experience. But as good as they are, they still feel more like incremental upgrades than sequels. Pokémon fans have come to expect a certain amount of repetition from the series, but the rigidity of the formula isn't an issue when the games release several years apart and each generation features a new world, new Pokémon, and new features and upgrades that have been born out of more advanced hardware. But Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 have none of these things to help distinguish them from the Pokémon



"I'll give you a hint.
The gate Trainer is female."



Black Version and White Version that came out just last year, so the feeling of sameness is stronger than ever. These games would have been a great opportunity for the developers to experiment with changes to the series's long-standing formula, but instead, every aspect of its quest unfolds in the same predictable fashion as every other game in the series. Why can't we have a different sort of protagonist with different goals? Why can't we have different HM abilities

that lead to novel ways to explore the world? With so many Pokémon to choose from, why are we stuck with the same three starting Pokémon from the previous pair of games, with the same three types as they have in every other game in the series? If Game Freak wants to make memorable sequels out of existing worlds, mechanics, and Pokémon, the studio needs to find something in the Pokémon formula that it's willing to change. That said, Game Freak's continuous process of expansion and refinement has created the most polished and voluminous Pokémon releases yet. Despite being a follow-up to an existing game duo, they're a fantastic

entry point to the series; you don't need to have played either of the previous games to understand the story, and these follow-ups have the same gentle learning curve as any other Pokémon title. But while Pokémon Black Version 2 and White Version 2 offer plenty of new things to do, much of the return trip to Unova will feel overly familiar to anyone who played their forebears. These are superior versions of already great games, but they don't offer a different enough experience to justify the "2" in their titles. —CASEY L.

PUBLISHED BY NINTENDO
DEVELOPED BY GAME FREAK
ESRB RATING EVERYONE

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT VIDEO GAME VEHICLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO DRIVE OR PILOT IN REAL LIFE?



RYO HAZUKI

Ryo Hazuki's favorite

vehicle is a car.

It seems like a rather

mundane vehicle,

but it's the only one I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



CHRIS HOFFMAN

Chris Hoffman's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only

vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



CORY MAGUIRE

Cory Maguire's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



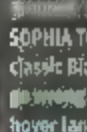
PHIL THEOBALD

Phil Theobald's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



SOPHIA THE 3RD

Sophia the 3rd's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



CHRIS HOFFMAN

Chris Hoffman's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



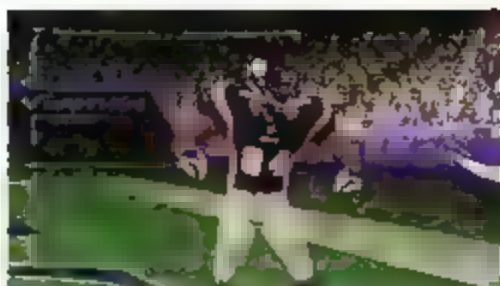
CORY MAGUIRE

Cory Maguire's

favorite vehicle is a

car. I mean, the

car is the only vehicle I've ever driven in real life. I've never been in a car, and I've never been in a car.



Take a Hike

MADDEN NFL 13

6.5

The running joke about sports games in general, and Madden in particular is that they amount to little more

than a full-price roster update. So what do you say when they actually amount to a little less than that?

Madden NFL 13 for Wii is nearly indistinguishable from last year's installment, with one key exception: it lacks online play. Despite that significant omission, and a general lack of new features and improvements (to be fair, the game does have new commentary from the team of Phil Simms and Jim Nantz), Madden 13 is a good football game, with many modes that actually make it better for local multiplayer than Madden on other platforms.

The genius in all these game modes is their ability to bridge the gap between not just casual and serious



football fans, but also casual and serious gamers. The five-on-five mode is an especially excellent demonstration of this appeal; it was easily the most-played variation among my friends, thanks to its fast action and clever power-ups that hark back to classic arcade sports games.

There are still reasons to love the way Madden's offered on Wii—it's just a shame that its value proposition relative to last year's edition is not among them. —**ADAM P.**

PLAY IT WII! ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER EA GAMES
FOR: EVERYONE

A Cuckoo Cost

ANGRY BIRDS TRILOGY

6.0

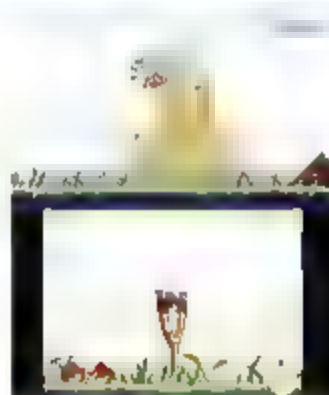
Angry Birds Trilogy brings the

world-renowned downloadable series to a Nintendo platform in a package that includes Angry Birds Classic, Seasons, and Rio. For those who haven't played Angry Birds before, here are the basics: you use a giant slingshot to fling your flock at towers and other structures in order to destroy

the green piglike creatures inside. Each type of bird has a unique ability for the job, such as dropping egg bombs or self-destructing at a button's push.

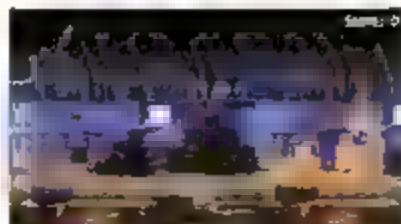
The gameplay still provides the enjoyable and casual experience that Angry Birds is known for, but this version's price doesn't suit it. Considering that the cost of the trilogy's three titles combined is only \$3 on most downloadable markets, this title's \$30 cost is inappropriate. Sure, there's a mediocre SteelPass

feature, achievements, online leaderboards, and a small handful of exclusive unlockable levels on offer, but these trivial additions don't justify a 10-times-higher expense. Although Angry



Birds Trilogy provides a unique Angry Birds experience for Nintendo 3DS owners, given the cheap and widespread availability of the game's core content, it's difficult to recommend Angry Birds Trilogy to anyone other than hardcore fans and those who truly have no other medium for playing it. —**CODY M.**

PLAY IT WII! ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER ROVIO/
HOUSEMARTIN
FOR: EVERYONE



This is **Alphonso**. He knows it's his job to teach his son what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

That's exactly what the **ESRB's rating summaries** are for.

Search for a game's rating summary at **ESRB.org**.

Lafayette, IN



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
RATING BOARD





Battle Royal

CODE OF PRINCESS

7.5 Half old-school hack-'n'-slash action, half anime-inspired silliness, *Code of Princess* provides a wealth of solid—if imperfect—slice-and-dice fun. Fans of the classic Sega Saturn game *Guardian Heroes* will feel right at home with *Code of Princess*'s three-planed battlefield, diverse character lineup, fighting-game-style special moves, RPG-esque character-growth system, and emphasis on both physical and magical attacks. It's a winning combination that works almost as well now as it did back in the 32-bit era.

Code of Princess also succeeds from a visual standpoint. If you like your games 2D, hand-drawn, and

gorgeously animated, there's a lot to enjoy here, and the music is catchy as well. In addition, the story entertains by deftly intertwining the serious and the ridiculous, as charmingly goofy characters and situations blend with tales of world-destroying Armageddon. Where else are you going to find a loveborn ninja, a narcissistic elf mage, and recurring gags about whether one of the characters is a cat or a raccoon? Plentiful cut-scenes (which come complete with appropriately over-the-top voice acting) bookend each of the game's bite-sized chapters, ensuring that the action never becomes a drag.

Such trappings go only so far, however. By its nature this is a repetitive genre, and although each playable character has a

nice array of standard moves and special attacks, you'll inevitably end up relying on a handful of the most useful ones that you'll repeat over and over. Frequently recycled environments don't help matters either. More problematic is the game's sluggish framerate: With the stereoscopic 3D visuals enabled the game is infuriatingly choppy, and even when you turn the effects off the action never feels quite as brisk



as it should.

Regardless, *Code of Princess* offers plenty of reasons to keep playing. Alongside the story mode the game offers a free play mode (which enables you to replay stages using a wider range of heroes) and numerous bonus challenge missions. There's tons of equipment to acquire, loads of characters to unlock and level up and versus and co-op modes for up to four players (both online and offline). The frame rate, thankfully, doesn't drop any further when engaging in multiplayer: It's just too bad you can't play the story mode cooperatively.

Ultimately, *Code of Princess* isn't as good as its spiritual predecessor, but it nonetheless offers an enjoyable, content-rich, and often genuinely funny action experience.

—CHRIS H.

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DEVELOPER KATSUMI
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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Nintendo 3DS				
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	3.0	Activision	281	T
Bit Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+



Centipede	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crash 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+

Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
Heroes of Ruin	7.0	Square Enix	280	T
James Earl Ray's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	6.0	Square Enix	281	E10+
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	7.0	Warner Bros.	280	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. 2	8.5	Nintendo	282	E
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokemon Rumble	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	6.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	8.0	Sega	280	E10+
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T

Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D: Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T



Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	8.0	Square Enix	280	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T

FRANK WILK

AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER—INTO THE INFERNO



Having recently finished the original TV series, I decided

to pick up the most recent and best-rated *Avatar: The Last Airbender* game. I couldn't find it on the Nintendo DS, so I went with the Wii version. The top-down action is decent, and the puzzles aren't bad.

It's a good game for the stylus and touch screen for

what it is. You can play through

the game in a few hours, but

it's a good game for the stylus

and touch screen for what it is.

It's a good game for the stylus

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It's a good game for the stylus

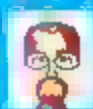
and touch screen for what it is.

Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
The Last Story	9.0	Xseed	281	T

The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	E10+
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Bestineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E

FRANK WILK

THE LAST STORY



We already conquered

another playthrough. The way

characters interact with each

other and with the game world prevents the action from ever get

ting stale. It's easily one of the

best in the series. I'm eagerly anticipating two



LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
Lost in Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	2.5	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
PokePark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
Super Mario All Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
X-Men: Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	9.0	Nintendo	277	T

Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	6.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Bestineer	265	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re: coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Marolo Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Conquest	9.0	Nintendo	279	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men: Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

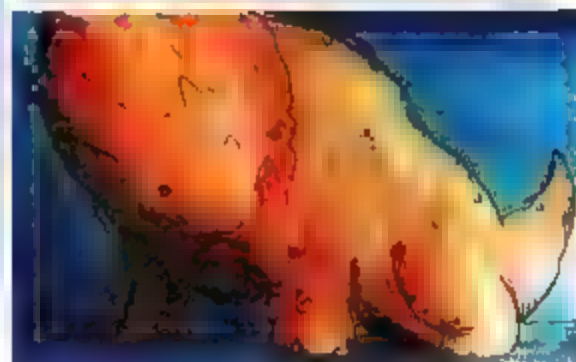
Nintendo DS

Allens	8.0	Sega	272	T
Infestation				

COMMUNITY



[Above] We'll refrain from making a cornea "eye" pun here.
[Below] Redoncus may dislike smobs, but this one seems more curious than anything.



FANDOM

A Symbolic Link to the Past

Honoring childhood memories through art

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA is much more than a game to artist Michael Meara—it's a reminder of all the great times he spent with his mom, who recently passed away from cancer. That's why Meara was inspired to paint Zelda characters and dedicate them to his mother.

"I have always been obsessed with the Legend of Zelda, and played every Zelda game ever

released," said Meara. "Before my mom passed, I started this Legend of Zelda watercolor project as a tribute to our time together when I was young. We played Zelda a lot together, and this was a great way to help me get through a very tough time."

Meara's paintings, which he refers to as mini watercolors, because they are only two to

three inches tall, were featured in a gallery display at the New England Institute of Art, from which he graduated recently. Meara recounts: "Back in April, my teacher was head of a gallery featuring professionals in the video game industry in the Boston area. He saw my watercolors on my blog and asked if I would be interested in featuring my art as well. This was huge for me because it was the only one from my school that was picked. It was also a big deal for

me because of how important it was to show off art that I did for my mom since she never got to see this project finished."

Meara started dabbling in art when he was eight years old, but just began experimenting with watercolors recently. Many of his works have been inspired by video games. "What got me started drawing when I was young was when I used to watch my older brother draw and wanted to learn to do the same. I played a lot of video games



at that time, and I remember using my issues of Nintendo Power for inspiration. I got my first Nintendo for Christmas, and my mom got me a subscription for Nintendo Power right after that. I even remember the very first issue coming in the mail (the Super Mario Bros. 2 cover). Nintendo Power had a huge impact on my passion for drawing and helped me mold my style. I remember used to wait by the mailbox every month in anticipation of the next issue.

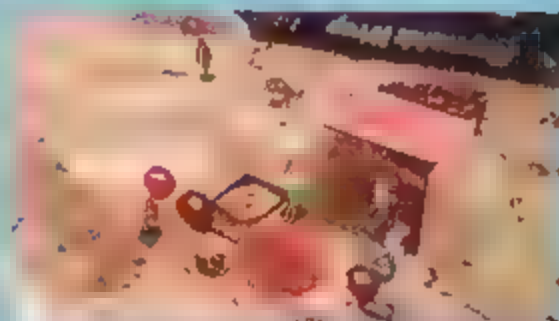
Like many moms, Mea-a's was also at that time interested in video games, but the Legend of Zelda captured her attention. Mea-a recalls, "My mom was obsessed with the original

Legend of Zelda. She had her own save file and even played the game when I was at school. Then, when the SNES came out, we got a new one. At the time, we played together using the same save file and helped each other out. I will never forget how she would yell at the screen and yell Ganon a stupid dingbat or stupid dippy stick when I would fight him at the end of the game. My mom had a way with words.

Mea-a is hoping to pursue an art career in the video game industry, and is getting ready to release his own original web comic about a superhero named Puck. You can view more on Mea-a's work at mea-aimages.com. **NICOLE T.**

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your best
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JOEY THEE AMES T&T



PHOTOGRAPH FROM [NO NAME GIVEN]



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GABRIEL G.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM TERRY



PHOTOGRAPH FROM META ZEKROM



FANDOM

Book This Trip

What can airships do? In this case, books or games

WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE the dizzying process that goes through a toy customizer Donald Kennedy's head when he stumbles upon an intriguing item. He's shared some inventive modified figures with us in these pages in the past, but his latest creation serves a function beyond

simply looking cool: It's actually a pair of bookends, each made up of one half of the iconic airship seen in various Super Mario games.

Kennedy, a 32-year-old electrical engineer from El Paso, Texas, admits that his project spawned from a practical need: "I honestly needed bookends for work, but

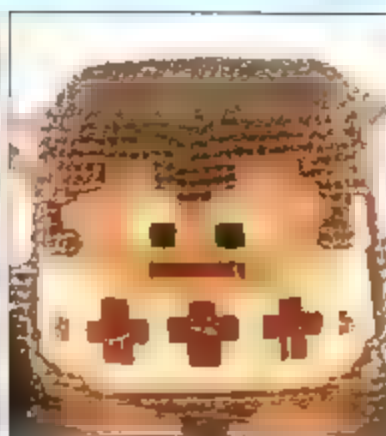
wanted something that was a little more my style," he says. "I've to customize my own things to give my desk a bit of flair."

Inspiration struck when he came across a pirate ship from the Minimates action figure line; he cut it in half and filled it with epoxy sculpting clay. With the prima-

piece in place, he set out to paint the ship, and add the little details that really bring the bookends to life as an extension of the Mario universe. Particular notable are the Bowser head on the bow of the ship, as well as the propellers, which began as LEGO pieces. Many of the figures come from the Forest Chozo Egg line. Though Princess Peach's seer hanging on the back window had to be modified.

Mario's positioning in particular was inspired by a very familiar game scene: "[One] thing that reminds me from Super Mario Bros 3 is Mario climbing up the anchor chain when he boarded the airship, so I wanted to incorporate that," explains Kennedy. He aims to make another set someday to utilize discarded ideas, but for the time being, these wonderful bookends will help hold up his game collection—they did—ever make it to his office. **ANDREW H.**





FANDOM

Monkey Shines

This Donkey Kong fan's secret

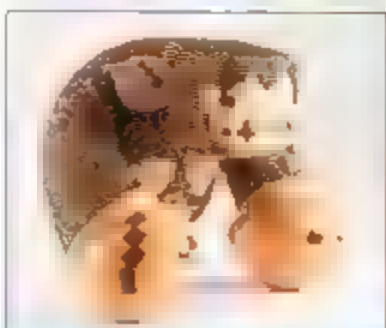
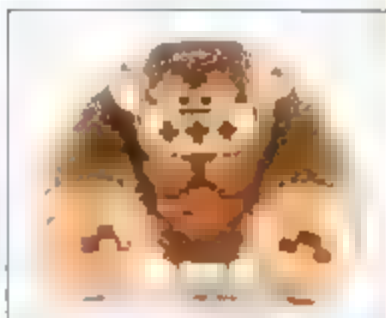
IF ~~LIKE THE HUMANS~~ in *Planet of the Apes*, you have a fear of simians, you probably should give your eyes from this vinyl Donkey Kong doll from Denise Vasquez in of Hollywood, California. But then you'd miss seeing the majesty of a glow-in-the-dark visage. Very bright, his doll is a sight to be rich covered. Over a thousand glass beads to give it a truly pixelated look. It has the illusion that DK kept out of the game screen and in the real world.

When was a little girl, a friend of mine had glow-in-the-dark stars, planets, and constellations on her ceiling. I've been inspired since. Vasquez infuses. Making my Donkey Kong's glow in the dark. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to incorporate yet another one of my childhood loves into this work of art.

Vasquez has a deep fondness for the classic Donkey Kong game on the NES, so when the Vinyl Figures 2.0 show asked her for a little piece in its game-themed iteration, she didn't even have to think about what game she wanted to pay tribute to. The idea of creating my 8-bit custom Donkey Kong vinyl toy simply flowed from my heart, so I listened!" she tells us.

Vasquez credits her family with being enthusiastic about celebrating her childhood loves. Her grandmother was a seamstress, which gave her access to amazing fabric materials, beads, zippers, buckles, threads, and more. "She sums up her artistic drive succinctly: 'As long as I have my imagination and some things, I could use to create. I'm happy.'"

DAVID W.



PHOTOS BY YOUNGBOY STUDIOS

FANDOM

Paper Mario Machine

A 30-YEAR-OLD MACHINING

9.11.11 10:00 AM 3.15.11

watch?v=OLjUEdSNhwg

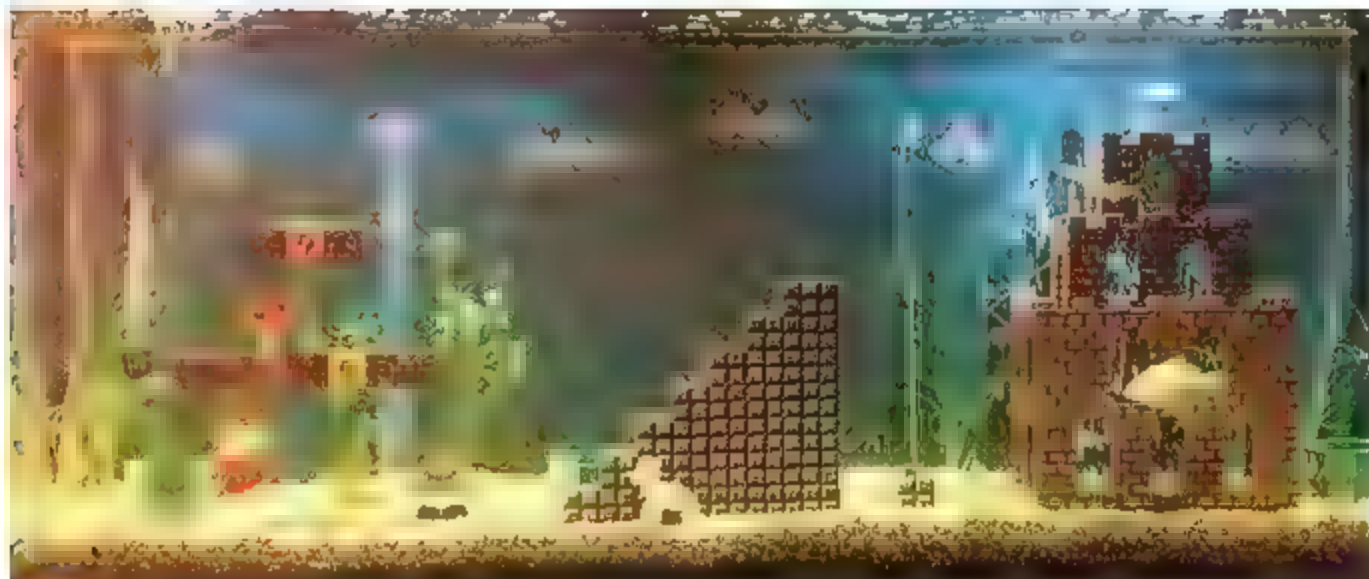
AFTER SIX YEARS of blogging and making videos about her craft, living in Brooklyn, New York, resident Meg Allen Cole put her talents to use on a game-related project: a Mario automaton. An automaton, in collector's words, is "a self-moving machine, which basically is a robot." In this case, an adorable, crank-operated ape-Mario robot that continually hops a question mark box to reveal the golden coin inside.



Cole undertook the project as a contribution to her craft community. She printed out the designs, carefully filed them out with an X-Acto knife, stuck them together with a glue stick, and made an axle that rotates around small chains, a snail-shell-looking mechanism that allows for a slow rise and fall of another component. Finally, she constructed a crank arm and the gears for the machine to make the mashing and inducing Mario magic happen.

It was a tough project, but well worth the time and trouble involved. "I think Cole has that iconic look and feeling him. Unlike so many things from my childhood, Mario has never disappeared."

To see Cole explain explaining how to assemble your own Mario automaton, check out www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLjUEdSNhwg. — DAVID W.



FANDOM

Fishy Mario Fans

One man turns his fish tank into an uncensored water World 1 tribute.

"IT ALL STARTED with a 10-cent goldfish and a bowl and grew from there," explains Cedrick Bearrs, who recently relocated from Detroit, Michigan, to Birmingham, Alabama, and took his fish tank with him. Bearrs received it as a gag gift at his old job, and he wanted to make "something that would be interesting and show off my personality a little... a nice conversation piece."

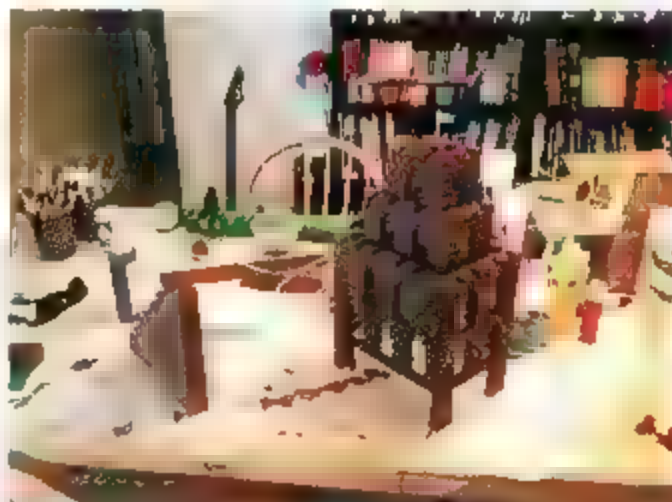
So Bearrs, who knew he would be moving soon, started planning what you see pictured: an astonishing 55-gallon fish tank whose interior has been stylized as an abridged recreation of World 1 from the original Super Mario Bros. After initially planning to sculpt everything out of clay, but deterred due to its prohibitive cost, he turned to LEGOs. "The only pieces I needed to buy specially were two large base plates and the clear pieces to hold up the bricks," says Bearrs. "Once all the elements were built I sprayed them with a white primer so the different-colored LEGOs

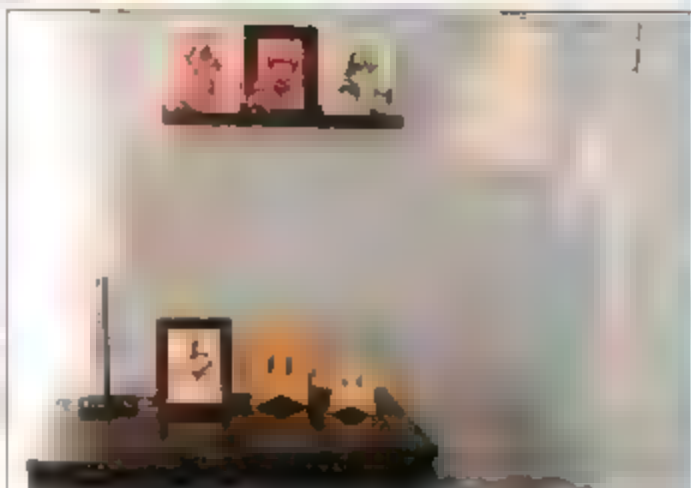
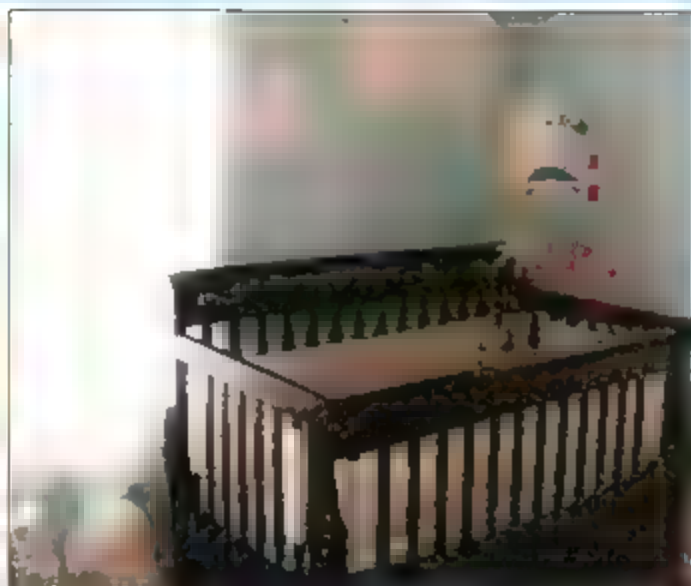
I used wouldn't show through the paint job. There's also an anchor of LEGOs that attach the elements to the baseplate, and the pipe is made from PVC pipe that's primed, painted, and sealed. Bearrs even used a food pick to finesse some of the fine details. And don't worry; he checked to ensure all the materials he used weren't toxic to his fish.

As for the background, it's two

large pieces of poster board with clouds, hills, and bushes from the game sized out with an X-Acto knife and waterproofed with contact paper. All told, it took a month to finish and the kitchen table "was covered in LEGOs and paint that whole time."

So why didn't he do a water level for his fish? "Water levels are the worst," responds Bearrs, quite nonchalantly. —DAVID W.





FANDOM

Baby Mario's Nursery

A lot of it, created by a couple of former Super Nintendo fans

HE MIGHT NOT KNOW IT YET, but little Ian Thomas has possibly the "coolest" parents in the world. When Seth and Codi Meyers found out they were expecting their firstborn, this creative Nintendo-loving Tennessee couple decided to give their son-to-be a whopper of a surprise: His amazing Baby Mario-themed nursery room. We'll pause for a moment to let the "awwws" subside.

"We wanted to make a room that we would have wanted when we were little," says Seth, who shares his wife's lifelong passion for video games. "When we found out we

were expecting, we knew exactly what we wanted to theme the nursery in: Baby Mario.

The room took roughly two months to design and complete, though a portion of that time was used to shuffle around the storage items they kept in there prior to getting the good news. "We both like to paint, draw, and sculpt, so we started figuring it out," Seth explains. "I'm a fan of old Nintendo Power Playes, so I used as a reference. Codi used a projector to put the images on the wall to see them paint, she worked so hard while pregnant to make it happen."

The Meyers did most of the work themselves, though they also enlisted the help of a few pals who pitched in with the Yoshi mistakes and other decorations. One family friend even crafted a custom 25 x 30" stained glass window of Baby Mario and Yoshi as a finishing touch. It's nearly impossible to be unimpressed since word about the room got out: Codi has even received requests from people for her to come paint/gaming-themed murals for them.

But most important of all, what does Ian think? He really enjoys the room, reports Seth of his son

who was born Sept. 29th, 2020. "He has a blast playing with all the different Nintendo characters, toys, and plush dolls. As of right now, our final plan is to leave it as it is for a couple years until he's old enough to know what else he may want."

Who knows? he adds, "I may turn it into a Pokémon or Super Mario Bros. room, or, I wonder, if I may turn my office into a Chrono Trigger office."

Beyond the cool nursery, Seth and Codi Meyers continue to pursue the "Awesomest Parents Ever" award: they opened her own video game store earlier this year, High Five Guys. **NATHAN M.**



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NEXT MONTH

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NINTENDO POWER

To our readers,

After a remarkable 24 years, Nintendo Power magazine is coming to a close—the December 2012 issue will be Nintendo Power's last. As one of the first dedicated video game magazines to launch in North America and one of the longest running, Nintendo Power will always have a place in history, as well as a place in our hearts. It's truly the end of an era.

Meanwhile, Nintendo is on the cusp of a new era in gaming. We're busily preparing for the launch of the Wii U console and we're excited to have more channels than ever before to communicate with you about what Nintendo is up to—on our official Web sites, through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, via our Nintendo Direct broadcasts, and through your Nintendo systems (did you get my latest SwapNote?)

Thank you for being a Nintendo Power subscriber, and thank you for your loyalty as a Nintendo fan.



Reggie

Reggie Fils-Aimé
President and COO,
Nintendo of America Inc.

As a lifelong Nintendo fan, and a charter subscriber to this magazine, it was a dream come true when I got the opportunity to helm Nintendo Power. For the past five years, it's been an honor and a pleasure to bring you the best, most in-depth Nintendo coverage around. We'll do our best to make the last few issues of Nintendo Power something special for you.

Thank you for being part of this wonderful ride.

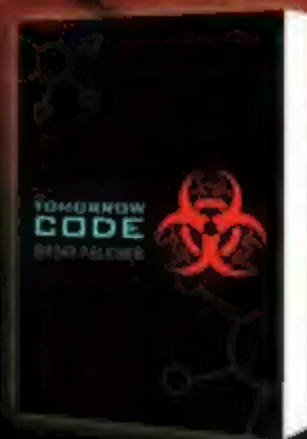
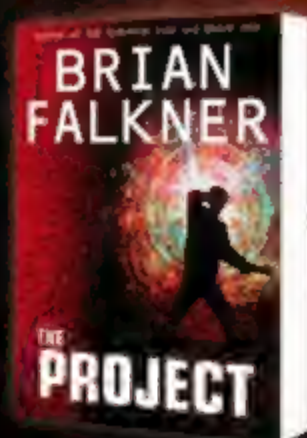


Chris

Chris Slate
Editor in Chief,
Nintendo Power magazine
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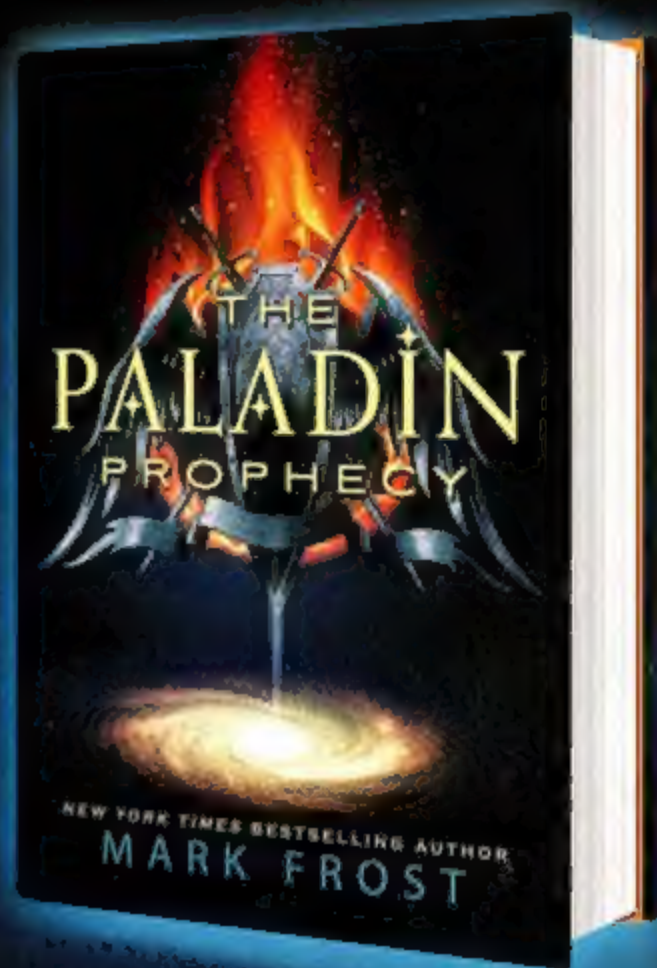


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